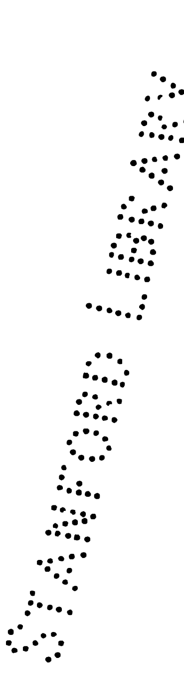






[redacted]


Courtiers and
Favourites of
Royalty
Paris
Societé des Bibliophiles
New York
Merrill & Baker


STANFORD LIBRARY









Madame du Barri

—

Etched by Mercier from the painting by Gulla

Courtiers and Favourites of Royalty

Memoirs of the Court of France
With Contemporary and Modern Illustrations
Collected from the
French National Archives

BY
LEON VALLÉE
LIBRARIAN AT THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE

Memoirs of Madame Du Barri

IN FOUR VOLUMES
VOL. I



Paris
Société des Bibliophiles
New York
Merrill & Baker



Limited to
One Thousand Sets of which this is copy

*No.*______

MEMOIRS

OF

MADAME DU BARRI

[redacted]

MADAME DU BARRI

A LOVE-CHILD, of lower than average condition, the future countess was born at Vaucouleurs, the 19th of August, 1743. She received the given name of Jeanne, and took her mother's family name, Bécus or Bégu, surnamed Quantiny. As to the name Vaubernier, by which she is usually designated, it was only conferred upon her later, for the needs of the cause and by means of a falsification of the public records.

Jeanne and her mother leave their province in poverty, to seek their fortune at Paris. They apply to M. Dumonceau, whom they have known at Vaucouleurs. That personage, one of the principal contractors for supplying the army with provisions, lodges them at first with a famous courtesan, The Frédéric, who was his mistress; then he has Jeanne placed with "The Daughters of St. Anne," a community where were received, for a modest compensation, girls of honest family "who found themselves in circumstances where they ran the risk of being lost." She remains there but a short time, as her continual escapades end in causing her to be sent away. Then her uncle or nominal uncle, Brother Picpus, installs her as lady companion with Madame Lagarde at the Cour Neuve; but there Jeanne involves herself in a love affair with the two sons. Obliged to withdraw, she enters Labille's, a millinery establishment in rue St. Honoré, and takes the name of Madamoiselle de Lançon. She is handsome; she loves to be told so: whereby, one day, at a gaming house kept in the rue de Bourgogne by M. Duquesnoy, she forms an intimacy with a roué, the Count Du Barri, who becomes her lover,

purposes to make her the instrument of his fortune, and dreams of giving her to the king, Louis XV., to replace the famous Pompadour. Against all expectation, thanks to the complicity of Lebel and the Marshal de Richelieu, the ambitious dream becomes a reality. Louis XV., enticed by the indefinable charm, the gayety, the vivàcious converse, the joyous laughter of Jeanne, falls in love with the milliner; and what the retinue takes at first for a mere passing toy changes rapidly to a veritable passion. Then, to save appearances and permit the young mistress to remain at court, she is married to Guillaume Du Barri, own brother to the roué, and given the title of countess.

Madame Du Barri now installs herself at the Palace of Versailles; but etiquette holds her aloof there until April 2, 1769, the day when the King succeeds in *presenting* her to his family and the court. That presentation! how many negotiations it necessitates! what confusion when the moment has at last arrived, and the countess does not appear! The company think everything has failed, or know not what to think of that extraordinary delay — of which the cause is nevertheless perfectly natural, for that great coquette, not finding her coiffure successful enough to suit her ideas, has remained at home to begin it all afresh! Covered with magnificent diamonds, clothed in the most resplendent toilette, of well-formed style, Madame Du Barri at last makes a triumphal entry. She dazzles even her enemies, who declare they have never seen a beauty rivalling hers.

This beauty, this perfection of plastic forms, is admired by the artists of the epoch, who repeatedly render homage to her. Drouais signs three portraits of Madame Du Barri: the first in feminine draperies, the second disguised as a man, the third as a Muse. Greuze represents her as a Bacchante, and takes her as a model for his picture of "The Woman with the Broken Pitcher"; Allegrain chooses her as a type of Venus; the English Cosway shows her to us in a toilette which already proclaims the Directory

type: and Madame Lebrun tells us in her *Memoirs* that she painted three portraits of the mistress of Luciennes. The sculptors are not less charmed. Pajou, Caffieri, Lemoyne, and still others reproduce a number of times, in marble, plaster, or porcelain, the bust of the graceful Du Barri. As to the engravers and the lithographers, their vulgarized work is met everywhere and under all forms.

Madame Du Barri is not desirous in any regard of the effective power which Madame de Pompadour had exercised in the affairs of France. She does not feel herself born for negotiations with ministers and ambassadors, for the intrigues and the cares of public life. She does not seek to impose her views and ideas on the King. But it is precisely this lack of political ambition which gives her in reality so much influence on the mind of Louis XV., who, tired of the domination of Mme. de Pompadour, has become refractory to all feminine tutelage.

Created by nature for love, a prey to the need of an unbridled luxury, Madame Du Barri meddles not much in politics. Her action does not make itself really felt except in important circumstances: the dismissal of the minister Choiseul, and the dissolution of the Parliament of Paris. Even there it is recognizable that she is the instrument of outside and hidden wills. She combats Choiseul because the clique which has borne her to the King's bed is interested in overthrowing that minister; then because Choiseul has been stirred up against her by the Duchess de Grammont, his sister, a clever and ambitious woman who had done everything to impose herself on Louis XV. as mistress. Lastly, her hate of the Parliament is inflamed by the clerical party, which incites her to restore religion and bring back the Jesuits to France. These two affairs are serious; nevertheless the favourite treats them almost like a heedless schoolgirl, a frolicsome child. Thus, she has dismissed a lackey, and announces it to the King in these terms, "I have sent away my Choiseul: when will you send away yours?" Or she plays with oranges; she

throws them into the air and cries, "Jump, Choiseul! jump, Praslin!"

Her true occupation, that which takes up the most of her time, is her millinery, her toilette. Every morning she receives the most renowned purveyors; for as soon as she rises each of them hastens to bring her, of their own devising, those knickknacks of fashion which are so enticing to women in general, and which are for her an arsenal where she finds the thousand resources that her coquetry has need of to charm her royal lover. Bourjot, Assorty, Barbier, Lenormand, Buffaut, exhibit their most shimmering silks to her; Madame Sigly tries gowns upon her worth more than 10,000 livres; Payelle, the modiste of the *Traits Galants* of the rue St. Honoré, exerts her ingenuity to discover new patterns, shows her laces, déshabillés, etc.; and Davaux completely embroiders for her, on designs of Michel de Saint-Aubin, robes of white silk, trimmed with shaded silk and colored spangles!

This capricious creature desires, buys, or has herself given everything that is beautiful, everything that attains a fantastic price. Pictures, statues, marbles, porcelains, highly sumptuous furnishings, jewels, trinkets, bronzes,—she gathers everything, she makes a collection of everything. Her apartment at the château, her houses at Versailles, her pavilion of Luciennes, become actual museums, where she heaps up the rarest, the most curious, the most costly objects. And if on some one day, by unusual hap, temptation forgets to knock at the door of the countess, the self-indulgent favourite knows how to correct that injury of Fate. She will speedily convoke around her the chief goldsmiths, jewellers, painters, and sculptors of Paris, and they will not leave her till charged with the costliest commissions.

For her Gauthier sets to work lovingly at his bronzes; for her Roettier, the foremost designer and sculptor in silver work of the eighteenth century, employs in profusion the precious metals, silver and gold; and all receive the

order to execute their commissions *in the most finished manner and carried to the highest degree of polish.* Finally, at the manufactory of Sèvres, all count must be abandoned of the number of pieces destroyed in firing before success is attained, in fabricating her vases with handles and goats' heads, her teapots with green ribbons and golden hatchings, her groups of biscuit ware, her basins of royal blue with trellises and birds, or her service with roses and garlands, of three hundred and twenty pieces, for ordinary use and suppers.

If you cast your eyes over the walls of Luciennes, you will admire on them the pictures of Pollemburg, the Ostades, the Teniers, the Vernets, the Casanovas, the Viens, the Greuzes, the Drouais, the Fragonards, etc., or the Gobelin tapestries fabricated by Cazette after Boucher.

Before this accumulation of artistic works, which she has inspired or given orders for, it is impossible nevertheless to refrain from noting the curious fact that Madame Du Barri has not been able to impress her personal stamp, has not created a style of her own, and on the contrary has always let herself be servilely guided by the taste of the day and the current fashion.

To settle for all these mad outlays, of which the total will never be known, it needed streams of gold from an inexhaustible Pactolus. The countess plunges her hands deep in the coffers of the State; she draws without accounting upon Beaujon, the banker to the court; she signs quantities of notes which the Abbé Terray, the controller-general of finances, accepts without discussion, as if they bore the signature of the King himself. And nevertheless, when the sudden death of Louis XV. supervenes, she remains with a multitude of huge clamorous debts, which the new King will satisfy in part, and on whose account she herself later, to her great regret, will have to sell many of her precious objects.

The new sovereign exiles the countess to the convent of Pont-au-Dames, in Brie. The pretty sinner departs with

her maids, and for a year has no other distraction than the visits of the jeweller whom she gets to come from Paris, and who shows precious stones to her. By force of supplications she obtains from Louis XVI., who recognizes her political insignificance, permission first to live on her property of Saint-Vrain, near Chartres, then to return to Luciennes. Now she recommences her ancient and joyous existence. There is nothing with her except dinners, receptions, pleasures. A true priestess of love, she attaches herself to her neighbor in the country, Lord Seymour; but she soon replaces him with the Count de Cossé-Brissac. He makes her heart beat as if she were still twenty, and retains her affection unbroken up to the day when he is butchered at Versailles, in September 1792. The countess weeps his death; she weeps for him so much with the Prince de Rohan-Rochefort, one of their common friends, that the day comes when Rohan-Rochefort succeeds Cossé-Brissac in her heart.

Who knows if the amorous avatars of the fair Jeanne, aged fifty at this time, would have terminated there? But the revolutionary storm bursts in the door of the pavilion of Luciennes. Among the people, some recall in the Convention that she has offered her fortune to Louis XVI.; that she has given shelter to wounded bodyguards; and that she has been three times to London under pretext of searching for stolen jewels, but in reality, they say, to conspire with the *émigrés*. Nothing more is needed. A suspect, she is arrested, thrown into prison, tried, and at last condemned to death. On hearing the terrible sentence pronounced, Jeanne faints. From that instant she has but one fixed idea: to gain time, to gain hours, minutes, seconds. Pleasure-loving flesh, she has a terror of death: she wishes to live, to live at any price. In the cell of the Conciergerie, where Marie Antoinette has been a prisoner, where she is shut up in her turn, she has the clerk come to her under pretext of dictating revelations to him. She abandons all her treasures to the nation; she indicates

one by one all the hiding-places where she has buried her precious objects; and when the fatal car is waiting for her, when the horses are stamping with impatience, she asks for a respite, — she still has something to say! In delivering herself up to the scaffold, she almost gathers a mob by her cries; and when she is bound to the fatal plank, they hear her as she supplicates, "Monsieur executioner, one little instant more!"

LÉON VALLÉE.

ORIGINAL PREFACE

Some critics have thought proper to dispute the claims of historical romance as an assistant in modern literature, but no person can deny that memoirs have been the useful auxiliaries of history.

Even foreigners have agreed that the French (to whom they so ridiculously refuse all title to epic verse) possess a singular talent for writing those kind of familiar histories, where the author so well avails himself of the first person to afford us a far more intimate acquaintance with either the actions of past ages, or the political events of our own time, than could have been drawn from the gravest records.

To merit the appellation of memoirs it becomes requisite that the historical picture thus presented should be the work of one of the principal actors, or, at least, that the narrator, attached to one of these eminent personages, should have partaken of his fortune in all its vicissitudes of good or bad, been the depositary of his most secret thoughts, and enabled to divine the secret motives of all his actions.

Many essential differences distinguish memoirs from history properly so called; we allude only to those whose writers lay claim to a greater or less degree of celebrity. The historian exercises a species of magistracy, he speaks in the name of general reason, whilst the author of memoirs judges merely according to his own individual opinion. We have a right to insist upon the historian being both impartial and disinterested, whilst we freely pardon the greatest partiality in him who indites the memoirs of himself or his contemporaries; he appears as though pleading for a particular

cause, and renders everything subservient to the egotistical views of a party or a hero. This party is frequently his own, and the hero, in favour of whom he would remove all opposing voices, is, probably, himself; he practises both the art of attack and defence, and oftentimes, setting aside the great interests of a people or a Court, he voluntarily places himself on the foreground of a picture, and takes a pleasure in explaining to us why he adopted certain measures under certain circumstances, or justifies himself for the conduct he followed on some other occasion.

Undoubtedly, the most fruitful period for memoirs will be that in which a great number of individuals have been actively employed for the public good. Thus the three last centuries (in which have occurred the three great political crises, known in France by the name of the League, the Fronde, and the Revolution) opened a wide field for the writers of autobiography. We shall pass over in silence the first and last of these occurrences, as having no reference to our present subject; the one being of too ancient date and the other too recent.

Those civil wars which witnessed the league of the nobles and Parliament against Louis XIV. during his minority, are rich in the most curious details connected with that struggle, which commenced in the drawing-rooms of Paris and terminated in the Bastille. From these events sprung the memoirs of Madame de Motteville and so many others, above all the memoirs of the famous Cardinal de Retz; and whose pen but his own could depict the man who displayed beneath his ecclesiastical robe as much courage and genius as the great Condé on the field of battle? Thus our interest never tires over this admirable narration.

After the Fronde these kind of memoirs become more rare, until they wholly change their character; the smooth, pacific courtier replaced the turbulence of the feudal baron, the conquered Parliaments prostrated themselves before Louis XIV., and all opposition fled the presence of this brilliant despot. The Bastille opened its gloomy doors to enclose those writers who had not sufficient tact to conceal their censure beneath

the veil of fable, whilst the grossest flattery was equally sure of encouragement and reward. For this reason we find flattery pervading every work, from the funeral orations of Bossuet to the letters of Madame de Sevigné. The orator, whilst dwelling upon the past life of the deceased Prince, forbore any allusion to the wars of La Fronde, satisfying himself with saying that the great Condé "wept over his faults." On the other hand, in the letters of Madame de Sevigné to her daughter, the noble lady appears to venture with fear and trembling upon the most innocent epigram, and should one escape her pen, she hastens to atone for her indiscretion by loudly extolling the handsome leg of the great monarch.

It would therefore be in vain to seek for genuine memoirs after La Fronde. Of whom could we ask them? of Dangeau? Certainly not. For, in spite of the title bestowed by this courtier upon his collection, the work is not one of memoirs, it is a mere journal and nothing else. The editor says, for instance, "We have learned this morning at Court the death of that excellent man Corneille." Here we have a complete specimen of the tone and form of an official gazette. Neither are the memoirs left us by Saint-Simon much more deserving that name. This witty writer took no part in the events which he relates; his active part was confined to a few unimportant measures relating to the affairs of some legitimate and legitimated Princes, after that he disappears completely from the scene; he transmits to us memoirs of the whole Court, with the exception of himself; his memoirs, therefore, cannot be truly styled such.

The memoirs of the Maréchal de Richelieu are merely a collection of scandalous anecdotes, which may occasionally amuse, but are much more likely to disgust; and, besides, a great part of what he writes may be justly styled apocryphal—they are attributed to Soulavie. Neither was it possible to have a greater number of memoirs of the reign of Louis XV. than of the Regency, or concerning the reign of Louis XIV. Valets, whose sole care or concern consisted in making their court to their master, are but little anxious

to publish to the world their own insignificancy; they lived from day to day as reckless of the past as of the future, and were silent because they imagined they had nothing to say.

Certain memoirs have been published under the name of some celebrated personages of the period, but the veracity of these accounts is generally doubted; it may indeed be assumed that the only persons really qualified to hand down to us a true picture of passing events were the female favourites of the King. These ladies were well informed of all that was going on; the ministers of State even prosecuted their political labours in their boudoirs. They themselves were the moving springs which set the great machine going, and around them the brainless courtiers of the ante-room sported or intrigued. To this state of things we owe the memoirs of Madame de Pompadour as well as those of the Comtesse du Barri, which form the subject of our present consideration.

It was about the year 1788 that the Comtesse du Barri arranged her Memoirs in the form of letters addressed to her friend, M. de V——. She wrote them less to justify herself from the calumnies laid to her charge, than to revive, in some measure, the beloved recollection of past scenes, which her heart regretted and sighed over in spite of herself.

Here we have one objection to get over. Does Madame du Barri really lay before us the "round unvarnished tale" she promises in her first letter? This is indeed somewhat embarrassing for an editor to reply to; nevertheless, we will candidly confess that in the first instance Madame du Barri deceives us by pretending to legitimacy of birth, while a recent decree from the Court of Paris pronounces her to have been a natural daughter. She likewise fixes her birth about the 28th of August, 1744, and the same Royal edict proves her to have been born on the 19th of August, 1746. She tells us also that she came to Paris between the ages of seventeen and eighteen, and yet it is well known that her mother's marriage with M. Rançon took place on the 18th of July, 1749. However, we may cede the point by supposing that Madame du Barri was herself in ignorance of her illegitimate

extraction, and has voluntarily forgotten the period of her birth, as well as her arrival in Paris.

But there is one fact of which she could not have been in ignorance, the dissipated life she led in her early youth; and here, it must be confessed, she does not treat us with the candour she engaged to do. It may easily be perceived that she feels shame at the retrospect of this part of her life, n which she abandoned to the first comer charms which, some years afterwards, were sufficient to enslave a monarch; however, although her pen is shy of revealing the history of past irregularities, and to use her own words, "glides over this period as quickly as possible," it allows us easily to guess them.

However this may be, no sooner had Madame du Barri appeared at Court, than she despised all concealment and falsehood; from that period she relates, with the most perfect sincerity, all she witnessed, said, or did. It would appear as though her elevation to the Sovereign's affections had purified her past life and absolved her by anticipation of all her subsequent errors; from this period she has no wish to conceal any occurrence, and from the moment of her elevation to Royal favour her recital assumes a free and ingenuous tone, unrestrained by any consideration and unfettered by any fear. How much piquancy do we find in the anecdotes she relates, from the adventure of the Comtesse d'Egmont to that of the Chancellor's wig! How true are her portraits, taking in all she has sketched, from that of the Maréchale de Mirepoix to that of the great Morand!

We mentioned the general vein of partiality which usually pervades memoirs, and these of Madame du Barri partake more strongly of this fault than any others we are acquainted with. Not that her partial feelings ever induce her to speak ill of her enemies, but they decidedly influence her manner of speaking of all those whom she has loved, or who have rendered her any service.

For instance, it appears to us that she entertains too high an opinion of the talents of M. de Maupeou, only because this personage helped to bring about the destruction of the

old Parliament. No great effort of genius was requisite to effect this great work, and the Countess cannot dissimulate that the attachment she felt for the Duc d'Aiguillon wonderfully assisted the Chancellor in his hatred against the gentlemen of the Parliament.

She bestows likewise too great an admiration upon the financial capacity of the Abbé Terray. The abbé was merely a witty money-changer, possessed of the most barefaced impudence. We have had a similar instance in our own time in the finance department. Heaven preserve us from a third Abbé Terray.

But of all the friends of Madame du Barri, the one she has most handsomely treated is the Duc d'Aiguillon. Can it be that she was really ignorant of the infamous conduct of this nobleman, or did the blindness of her regard for him effectually shut her eyes to the enormities he had committed? This is more than we can take upon ourselves to decide; but we do think that the Countess, who, according to her own account, possessed a natural kindness of disposition, would never have loved the Duc d'Aiguillon had she been aware of the brutal nature of this man; doubtlessly the persecutions the MM. de la Chalotais and the whole of Bretagne experienced at the hands of the Duke, persecutions which finished only with his disgrace, must have been wholly unknown to her. It is well known that in the time when the Duc d'Aiguillon commanded in Bretagne, in 1758, the English made a descent upon St. Cast, a battle took place, they were driven back to their ships with considerable loss; during the engagement, the Duc d'Aiguillon kept himself prudently ensconced in a mill. Upon his return to Rennes one of his partisans thought proper to extol his bravery in the presence of La Chalotais, and to assert that he had returned covered with glory. "Rather say with flour," replied the Attorney-general. This unfortunate witticism drew down upon M. de la Chalotais the implacable hatred of the Duc d'Aiguillon, and led to his being confined as a criminal in the Château de Loches. The Comtesse du Barri, in her Memoirs passes over all these facts in silence, but it was not

possible to conceal them; the eloquent pages written by La Chalotais in prison, *with a toothpick*, have left an indelible disgrace upon the name of the Verres of Bretagne.

Another personage whom the Comtesse du Barri treats with equal indulgence is Louis XV. Her first portrait of him is not, however, a flattering one; she styles him "a sentimental egotist"; but quickly her opinion of the monarch assumes a more favourable bias, as though the continual favours with which her Royal lover loaded her had effected a total change in her view of his character. She incessantly vaunts the King's generosity and amiable disposition, whilst we could cite many facts which would incontestably prove his cold and selfish character; we shall, however, content ourselves with bringing forward two which are not generally known.

Amongst the officers who composed the household of Louis was a gentleman who entertained the most nervous apprehension of death. Well, incredible as it may seem, it was the King's delight to speak to this unfortunate man of death; and, above all, to give him commissions which necessarily brought the dreaded subject before his eyes. Thus, upon the most frivolous pretexts, this poor gentleman was continually despatched to the caverns of St. Denis.

The day on which Madame de Pompadour, whom Louis had once so tenderly loved, was to be deposited in the tomb, the King, standing in one of the balconies of the Château, surrounded by several courtiers, suddenly drew out his watch, and regarding it with indifference, "Ah," said he, "'tis the hour fixed for the funeral of Madame de Pompadour; she will have a fine day."

Madame du Barri herself relates the history of the portfolio of Madame de Pompadour; which plainly indicates how little the heart of Louis was gifted with affectionate recollections. Without having the same implicit reliance as Madame du Barri in the virtues of her illustrious lover, we must nevertheless agree with her that Louis XV. was by no means destitute of virtues; but the youth of this Prince had been passed in the midst of the orgies of the Regency, and his taste was early

corrupted by a species of pleasure as destitute of delicacy as refinement. When old age arrived, his egotism became that of an infirm voluptuary, despising that public opinion by which he felt himself despised. He died; and the disgust which had been entertained for him during the latter years of his life ceased not at his death. The people suffered his coffin to proceed alone and unattended to St. Denis, as though they sought by this solemn and impressive absence to protest against the title of "well beloved," with which they had formerly honoured their king.

Let us now return to the Memoirs of Madame du Barri. As we before observed, they are written in the form of an epistolary journal, and we have taken the liberty of dividing them into chapters instead of letters, in order to prefix to each a summary of its contents. It is not possible to fix with precision the period of this curious correspondence; but, as Madame du Barri occasionally speaks of events as though they were passing at the moment of her writing, we may reasonably suppose that her first letter was written at the time when M. de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, entered into the Ministry. Her last letter, dated October, 1789, is filled with the terror with which the events of the second or third of this month had inspired her; and the Countess relates, with apparent dread, the reappearance of that mysterious personage who, ten years previously, had foretold her elevation.

He to whom these letters were addressed has carefully abstained from any corrections; he has wisely preferred leaving them with here and there a grammatical error, to spoiling them by an over-refinement of that style, occasionally so picturesque and always witty.

Madame du Barri had received a good education, which, in the society of the Maréchale de Mirepoix, ripened to perfection. Let not the reader be surprised at the petulancy of her manners and the sharpness of her replies,[1] as she herself

---

1 The editor has nevertheless ventured to correct and modify certain intemperate expressions which have not survived the disorganised period they allude to.

[redacted]

declares she acted thus from a preconcerted plan. Louis XV. was satiated with pleasure in its Court suit, and longed to be loved without the burden and embarrassment of studied graces.

The Comtesse du Barri fulfilled his utmost wishes; besides, it is easily perceived that she could assume a very different manner when she thought proper, and that, when occasion suited, she could play off the great lady as well as anyone. Even her enemies are ready to grant this, and allow that on her presentation she conducted herself with as much ease and dignified grace as though her whole life had been passed at Court.

And here, by the way, we will just stop to notice a singular mistake made by the Comtesse de Genlis. This lady says in her Memoirs, vol. ii., pp. 108 and 109, that her aunt, Madame de Montesson, was presented in the beginning of November, 1770, on the same evening as Madame du Barri. We would beg of the Comtesse de Genlis to observe that Madame du Barri was presented, not in November, 1770, but on the 22nd of April, 1769; that is to say, full eighteen months before Madame de Montesson. It is likewise well known that hers was the only presentation which took place upon that day. This may be the more easily ascertained in the most positive terms from the conversation held by the King on the evening preceding her presentation; a conversation carefully copied even into those pamphlets written against Madame du Barri, and which she herself notes down in her Memoirs. It must be by some strange failure of memory that Madame de Genlis declares she saw the ladies of the Court flying with terror from the presence of Madame du Barri. To have given a better colouring to the fable of their joint appearance at Court, Madame de Genlis should have paid a little more attention to dates—stubborn, inexorable dates!

M. de V—— was far from suspecting the cruel end which fortune or fate had in store for him; but, from the commencement of 1793, seeing the turn which things were taking, and apprehensive that these Memoirs, if found, might compromise his safety as well as that of the fair writer, he concealed them in the recesses of a cabinet constructed in the wall, and con-

cealed by the wainscot. Perhaps he might have destroyed them had he anticipated any difficulty in hereafter disposing of them. But, arrested by the order of the Committee of Public Safety, he was not long in following his friend to the scaffold.

His successors could not prevail on themselves to destroy such valuable documents of the last century. On the other hand, they were apprehensive of publishing, until now, a work in which several persons still living might find themselves unfavourably mentioned. However, at the present period, the greater number of Madame du Barri's contemporaries are gone, like herself, to their last account; and to the small number who survive her, the perusal of these Memoirs can only be a matter of simple interest and curiosity. Madame du Barri mentions the most illustrious of them with expressions of the most profound respect.

In 1803 appeared "Memoirs of the Comtesse du Barri," in four volumes, 12mo, by M. de Faucrolles. This writer, known only by some frivolous and carelessly-written romances, has extracted these pretended memoirs word for word from the work entitled "Anecdotes of the Comtesse du Barri, from the Time of her Birth to the Death of Louis XV." He has completed it with the aid of some pieces entirely destitute of interest, except those which relate to the Countess's lawsuit.

The same writer has also published the "Correspondence of Madame du Barri." We have strong reasons for believing that the whole of this collection is a forgery. However, it is very unimportant; for it appears to have fallen into the most complete oblivion.

We trust to the known judgment and candour of the public to discriminate between those fabricated productions and the authenticated Memoirs we now lay before it. They are so much the more interesting, as they show us the most illustrious personages figuring familiarly in the domestic circle of the monarch's favourite; to hear them speak is alone sufficient to mark their individuality; their words, their phrases could have issued from no lips but their own. The Duc de Richelieu bears no resemblance to the Chancellor Maupeou, neither is

there any likeness between the Duc d'Aiguillon and the Duc de Choiseul. The Maréchale de Mirepoix is wholly unlike Mademoiselle du Barri; and although Comte Jean (who might be taken for a sketch from the pen of the great Sir Walter Scott) may be likened by many to the Prince de Soubise, he really is essentially different.

Madame du Barri shows herself neither implacable nor vindictive in her Memoirs; and she does ample justice to the Duc de Choiseul as well as the Duchesse de Grammont, although both had behaved ill towards her. She prefers no accusation against them, but relates, without bitterness, all that passed between them and herself. However, simply as she appears to have treated her adversaries, it is very evident how they behaved towards her. She reproaches them with satires, their pamphlets, their libels; and contents herself, by way of revenge, with a little playful quizzing of the Duchess.

How comes it, then, that Madame du Barri, in spite of the constant kindness evinced by her, has been represented under such odious colours? We might almost suppose that the hatred with which Louis XV. was regarded had reflected upon his favourite; for with what, personally, could she be reproached?—her enormous expenses? But to that we answer that surely the King had a right to confer on his mistress unlimited command over his privy purse; and even if otherwise, six millions more or less in the treasury of the State were nothing at a period when each Court intriguer was permitted to carry it away by handfuls.

Perhaps it will be urged against the Comtesse du Barri that she took too decided a part in the destruction of the Parliaments. But which of us can say whether she was right or wrong? We who are of the ancient magistracy as far back as its original institution may agree that she well deserved her fall; but let us likewise remember that the cleverest spirits of the time, the most independent characters of which the period could boast, Voltaire and Rousseau, were the declared enemies of Parliaments.

Will anyone step forward and accuse Madame du Barri

of using her power to render anyone miserable? Surely not. When she became Queen, after the fashion of Madame de Pompadour, not only did she abstain from ever demanding a single *lettre de cachet*, but she even solicited the pardon of some imprudent persons whom it had been necessary to punish. In a heart so open to every generous sentiment hatred could find no place.

The proof of all we have advanced will be found in these Memoirs; in them it will be seen that she frequently complains of an individual whom she praises and commends a few pages further on. This the reader will recognise in the case of M. de Roquelaure,[1] MM. de Soubise, de la Vrillière and several others. It will be readily perceived that these Memoirs were written without any decided plan. The pen of the Countess rapidly glides along, conducted only by the accuracy of her recollections or the aid of her daily notes.

We might likewise point out faults of chronology, transpositions of dates, contradictions and mistakes. All these it would have cost little trouble to correct; but we feared to substitute our own writing in the place of that of the Countess, and we preferred leaving the Memoirs, with all their defects and all their originality, to substituting a fictitious academical exactitude of style.

Possibly the reader may experience some curiosity to know what became of this family Du Barri, who made so great a noise during several years. We will endeavour to gratify them in a few words.

Comte Jean, whom his sister-in-law paints in so fanciful a manner, and who, like Figaro, was worth more than his reputation, quitted France immediately upon the death of Louis XV. He returned a short time afterwards, first to inhabit Paris, and afterwards to fix himself at Toulouse. This, at least, is what is said of him in the "Toulousaine

1 We will just observe that, in the "Memoirs of Madame du Barri," vol. i., this prelate is styled old (*vieux*). He was by no means so at the period when the Countess wrote; it is an error of the transcriber. The word in the original manuscript is handsome (*beau*).

Biography," a work recently published; it speaks of him in the following words:

"Comte Jean built a magnificent hotel in the Place St. Sernin, in which he collected all that luxury could devise; a garden laid out after the English fashion, the first which had been seen in the country; a valuable collection of pictures and statues, the works of the greatest masters, attracted crowds to view the terrestrial paradise he called his own. Persons of the most exalted rank were willing to visit Comte Jean, to sit at his table, and to be present at the numerous fêtes he gave; the frankness of his manners, and the benefits he liberally bestowed upon all the poor and needy round about, drew down upon him the friendship and esteem of high and low, and obtained for him the warmest partisans.

"When, in 1787, the ministry conceived and executed a parliamentary reform, Du Barri, either by inclination or address, evinced the utmost devotion in the cause of the Sovereign courts. He embraced the part of the magistrates with so much energy that he was obliged to go to Paris to answer for his sentiments, in company with MM. Jaunne and Lafrage, two celebrated advocates of Toulouse, who had likewise given the most striking proofs of their attachment to the Parliaments. When the courts were recalled in October, 1788, Du Barri, Jaunne and Lafrage returned to Toulouse, where they made an almost triumphal entry. Crowns were decreed to each of the trio, and their names were celebrated in couplets, which are still extant.

"Upon the formation of the National Guard of Toulouse in 1789, Comte Jean, appointed second colonel of the Legion of St. Sernin, armed and equipped his troop with every demonstration of the greatest devotion to the new institutions. He did not, however, like many others, seek to avenge himself at the beginning of the Revolution for the pretended injuries he had experienced at Court. He did not deceive himself as to his past conduct, and he continued the faithful and respectful subject of the unfortunate Louis XVI.

"After the 10th of August Du Barri was arrested by those very men whom he had fed and clothed. Scarcely was

the revolutionary tribunal created at Toulouse than he was denounced by it. The impetuosity of his conduct during the reign of Louis XV. was the cause assigned for his condemnation. During the debates of the 17th of January, 1794, he displayed great firmness, and replied only to the insidious questions of the public accuser, Copelle, in these words, 'What would it avail me to dispute with you respecting the few days which remain to me of my existence!' His scaffold was erected on the Place Royale. As he was going to execution, Comte Jean appeared disquieted; for a few minutes he seemed moved almost to tears; but quickly overcoming this weakness and resuming all his usual firmness, he saluted the crowd assembled around him. 'Adieu, my friends! adieu, my fellow-citizens!' cried he; then pronouncing a short harangue to the people, he met the stroke of death. He was born in 1722. Of two marriages there remained but one son (the fruit of his first union), known to the world under the title of Adolphe, Vicomte du Barri. This young man, after having espoused Mademoiselle de Tournon, abandoned her and fled to England, where he was killed in a duel, arising from a quarrel respecting cards. He left no family."

Comte Guillaume du Barri, born in Levignac in 1732, came to Paris, for the first time, to receive the hand of Mademoiselle Lange. He returned to Toulouse, where he continued to reside, greatly beloved by his fellow-citizens. He died the 28th of November, 1811, leaving, by another marriage, a son, who held the rank of colonel, Chevalier of the Orders of St. Louis and the Legion of Honour.

Elie du Barri, Count d'Hargicourt, owed his first rapid advancement to the interest and credit of his family, but he was not long in confirming his good fortune by his own merit; he was successively appointed an officer in the regiments of Beance and Champagne, second colonel of the Corsican regiment, lieutenant-colonel in the Queen's regiment of cavalry, captain of the one hundred Swiss belonging to the Count d'Artois and field-marshal by seniority, Chevalier of Nôtre-Dame du Mont Carmel and

of St. Louis; he was twice married, first to Mademoiselle de Farnel and afterwards to Mademoiselle de Chabrel At the King's return in 1814, Count d'Hargicourt became colonel of the National Guard of Toulouse. He died in 1820, aged seventy-nine. During his long career he continued to possess the public esteem, and he was by all ranks styled that which it reflects the greatest credit on mortals to become, a truly honest and good man; he left an only daughter, the issue of his second marriage, who was afterwards united to Count de Narbonne Lara.

The Mesdemoiselles du Barri were never married, although they received many illustrious offers. They felt the painfulness of their own situation as connected with their sister-in-law, whose disgrace must occur sooner or later, and they preferred keeping their independence in a single state. At the death of Louis XV. they retired to Toulouse, where they lived till the fall of the Empire.

We have now only to speak of the latter years of the Comtesse du Barri from the month of October, 1789, the period where her Memoirs conclude. We have before stated that in the month of October, 1789, the Comtesse du Barri began to entertain the most gloomy forebodings of her destiny; in fact, from this period until her unfortunate end her life was one continued series of griefs and misfortunes.

In November, 1789, some villains, by threatening the Comtesse du Barri with a libel which might have compromised her safety, succeeded in obtaining from her considerable sums of money.

Two years afterwards, in the month of January, 1791, some thieves, profiting by her absence, broke into her château of Lucienne, and carried off all her diamonds and other valuables.

Still this was nothing vitally important. But the following year her lover, M. de Brissac, perished on the scaffold. It is even said that the monsters who were so soon to shed her blood carried to her the head of her beloved chevalier, and, throwing it before her on the table at which she sat exclaimed, "Behold the head of your lover!"

The 22nd of September, 1793, the Comtesse du Barri was arrested, and she had the grief to see amongst the number of her most implacable enemies a servant whom she had loaded with benefits, and treated as though he had been her own son.

She had been four times compelled to take a journey to London relative to the theft of her diamonds; and she was accused of having gone to that city to conspire with the enemies of the Republic; of having lent money to the *emigrés*; and, above all, of having committed the unpardonable offence of wearing mourning for the unfortunate Marie Antoinette. She was accused, and that is equivalent to saying that she was condemned to death.

Madame du Barri preserved a considerable portion of firmness until the last day of her existence;[1] but on the 9th of December, 1793, as soon as she saw the fatal cart, her courage wholly abandoned her. During the journey, from her extreme paleness, she might have been supposed already to have received the stroke of death, had not her groans announced that she still existed.

When she arrived at the Place de la Révolution, and was put into the hands of the executioner, she uttered loud shrieks, exclaiming, "Help me! help me!" Whether the horror of death inspired these words, or whether she trusted that the multitude would interfere and snatch her from her fate, is a matter of little import. However, the officer prepared to deal the blow which should end her earthly woes. "One instant!" cried she; "Sir! for the love of heaven, grant me but one moment more!" But ere the moment for which she prayed had expired, the Comtesse du Barri had ceased to exist.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I

CHAPTER X

PAGE

CHAPTER XI

CHAPTER XII

CHAPTER XIII

CHAPTER XIV

CHAPTER XV

CHAPTER XVI

CHAPTER XVII

CHAPTER XVIII

CHAPTER XIX

CHAPTER XX

CHAPTER XXI

CHAPTER XXVII

CHAPTER XXVIII

CHAPTER XXIX

CHAPTER XXX

CHAPTER XXXI

CHAPTER XXXII

CHAPTER XXXIII

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

VOLUME I.

MEMOIRS

OF

MADAME DU BARRI

CHAPTER I

On what occasion these Memoirs were written—Louis XV.'s opinion of M. de Brienne—Birth of Madame du Barri—Her family—The Duc de Richelieu mystified—M. Billard du Monceau, godfather of Madame du Barri—Infancy of Madame du Barri—Her coquetry—Death of her father—She comes to Paris with her mother—Arrival in Paris—Father Ange Gomart—The boarding-school—Madame de Renage—Mademoiselle Frederic—The convent of Sainte-Aure—A convent life

You insist on it, then, my friend, that I shall write the journal of my life. My constant refusals to satisfy your curiosity have not discouraged you. "You have seen so many things!" you are incessantly saying to me; "your adventures are so varied and piquant, the events you have witnessed are so extraordinary and important, that your reminiscences, in my opinion, would be better calculated than any I ever met with, or can imagine, to throw a light upon the age in which you lived."

You are, perhaps, right, my friend, but am I at liberty to disclose the whole truth? Does not the peculiarity of my situation call for certain concealments and repressions? Yet if I write, I would conceal nothing. I wish to withhold nothing; in a word, I am unwilling to lie. I am emboldened, moreover, by the remembrance that I am writing to you—you alone, I mean. Never, as you have promised me, allow these sheets to quit the secrecy of your private cabinet. Re-

flect on the delicacy of the confidence I am about to place in you. Think of all the petty enmities, the deadly hatred which any indiscretion on your part would necessarily arouse against me. Should the time ever arrive when the possession of these scribblings would endanger you or me in any way, throw them into the flames, and let there be no further question concerning them.

You see by the preamble that I am somewhat timorous, and, indeed, I am so without scarcely knowing why. But the future appears to me in a threatening posture. Some great event is preparing which inspires me with apprehension. On the one hand, the disputes with the Parliaments perpetually disquiet me, and if my wishes had been acceded to in 1771, matters would not have been pushed to such an extent. On the other hand, M. de Brienne appears to me to justify but too much, by his line of policy, the prediction of the late King. Louis XV. said to me one day, when speaking of him, "He is ambitious without talent; he thinks himself equal to the government of a State, and before a fortnight he would be lost in the first portfolio that would be entrusted to him." I beseech you never to hint this opinion to M. de Brienne, or he would be the death of me.

But whatever may be the result of M. de Brienne's plans, which seem to be conducting the monarchy I know not whither, and the Parliaments which are grinding it God knows how, I must write the journal of my life; that is to say, I must make a long confession. You must be aware that the engagement you have compelled me to make is of a serious nature, but I will fulfil it notwithstanding; I will tell you the truth, the whole truth, whether flattering or otherwise. I will not do as that demoiselle De Staël, of whom it was said that "she only painted the bust of herself." I will give a full length picture, and if my self-love does not mistake, you will prefer my portrait to hers. Thus, my friend, I will conceal nothing from you—nothing. You will learn all my wildness and all my faults. What, in fact, should I gain by deceiving you? I have the misfortune or happiness to be too well known to you to think that I can escape you;

therefore, as I cannot deceive you in *every* respect, I will not attempt to do so in *any*. One small prayer, and I begin. Laugh as little as you can at my style, which is somewhat whimsical, and my orthography, which is rather antique. I write French pretty much after the manner of the Maréchal de Saxe, whom they wished to make a member of the Academy.[1] Do not be astonished if you find a discrepancy between what I write in my own journal and what has already been published about me, or rather, I should say, *against* me. What I write is the truth, all the rest is but calumny. This premised, and you thus informed, I enter on the subject-matter.

I was born on the 28th of August, 1744, at Vaucouleurs. Much has been jokingly said at various times of my having first seen the light of day in the same village which produced Jeanne d'Arc. This similarity signifies but little. The wags would have had a more prolific theme had they but known that my mother enumerated amongst her female ancestors the illustrious heroine of Orleans. I do not, however, pretend thence to insinuate that I am descended lineally from Jeanne d'Arc. God preserve me from it! I have too much confidence in the chaste surname which was bestowed upon her, and which forms part of my titles of nobility, although had I lived, as she did, in the time of Charles VII., I should probably have been more jealous, you will say, of the character of Agnes Sorel than of hers. So much for my mother's side. As to my father's family, it was by no means despicable, although some most contemptible things have been said of it. The Vaubernier family, to which my father belonged, came from very good citizens and even of petty nobility. I say petty nobility, because, since I have known that of the Court, I dare not boast of belonging to that. It is so lofty and so haughty whilst entrenched behind

1 It was the Maréchal himself who modestly refused the chair in the well-known billet, the orthography of which would not be a title of exclusion in the eyes of certain Academicians of the present day, "*Il veule me fere de la cademie sela miret coure une buge a un chat.*" (It is proposed to make me an Academician, which would suit me about as well as a finger ring would become a cat.)—Ed.

its musty parchments! I had, notwithstanding, the gratification, one fine day, of seeing one of these nobles with a long genealogy completely humiliated in the person of the Duc de Richelieu. It was at my own house on New Year's Day. The personage in question paid me a visit with all those airs which you may imagine. Suddenly there entered one of my valets, who had been previously instructed. He went straight up to M. the Duc de Richelieu with a pamphlet in his hand, and gave him—guess what! the famous memorial of the Parliament of Paris against ducal nobility. M. de Richelieu turned pale. Never did I see such an excess of anger as he exhibited; I really thought he would have fallen down dead. I was delighted, for I was not altogether innocent of this mystification. But enough of dukes and nobility; let us now talk of ourselves.

My father having no fortune, had been compelled to accept a mean situation as clerk at the Barrières. He married my mother, who was no richer than himself, for love. Of many children who sprung from this marriage, the only survivor is the one who now addresses you. When I came into the world, Madame Dubreuil, wife of the guard of a diligence at Vaucouleurs, who was attached to my parents, and was pained to see them struggling with the world, wishing to offer all the consolation in her power, proffered her services as my godmother. A worthy monk was selected as my godfather; he was my father's brother, and known in the country by the name of Père l'Ange. But fortune, who doubtless already favoured me, had destined for me another godfather. The war of 1744 brought to our village M. Billard du Monceau, a financier, and a man at once rich and benevolent. He came to Vaucouleurs on the day of my birth. Madame Dubreuil, only considering the interest of the family, resolved to turn over to him the responsible honour which had been destined for my poor uncle. He accepted it. I had, then, for a godfather M. Billard du Monceau, who did the thing in a handsome manner, as might be expected from a man of his wealth. I should not forget to tell you that I was baptised in the name of Marie-Jeanne.

As I grew up I became handsomer every day; at least, they told me so; and, considering all things, I do not refuse to believe that such was the case. It is to my face alone (and I know it) that I am indebted for my elevation; and now that my beauty is daily becoming less and less, now that spots of red begin to deface the skin of my countenance which was once so fair, it is not without regret that I remember what I have been. Decrepitude inspires me with horror; I think I would rather be dead than ugly. Let me quit such distressing thoughts.

I was then pretty; I had a charming air; but I should more particularly have been seen when decked out in my Sunday clothes. The joy which this apparel gave me added to my beauty, for I gave even then some manifestations of coquetry—it must be inherent in our sex. I was anxious to please; I wished to please even myself. I studied the looking-glass of my mother, and those of all our neighbours to which I could obtain access. How many moments have I passed in unsophisticated admiration of my increasing beauty! At first I regarded myself, then my simple gown; my gown, because it was a part of myself, a portion of my little person; and then, on leaving my dear mirror, I looked at my receding figure as long as I could catch a glimpse of it.

Fortunately for my vanity, I was not the only person who thought me handsome, and my beauty gained me all hearts. Our neighbours vied with each other to make the most of me, caress me, and testify their admiration. Everywhere I was welcomed and my company sought. How happy I was in those days! Fifteen years subsequently my beauty did not obtain the same success. When I appeared at Court, the contest was which of the courtiers could find me most ugly. It appeared as though my favour had supplanted the pretensions of all others, and by the general outcry it would have seemed as though I had only come to rival all the ladies of the first rank.

To return to my taste for dress, which was not always so fully satisfied as I desired. My father earned enough for our subsistence, and no more. My godmother was dead. As

to my godfather, he seemed to have forgotten his pretty little god-daughter. They wrote to him, but he returned no answer; they wrote to him again, and then came some well-sounding phrases, full of promise, but nothing more. Time glided on, and our situation was still the same; that is, very dull and pinched as to means. This was not all: a greater misfortune was in store for us. My father, the sole support of the family, died. I was only eight years of age, but wept very bitterly. In spite of my natural levity, I have always deeply mourned for those who loved me and those whom I loved. I think I still hear the piercing, terrible cry which my mother uttered at the moment when my poor father breathed his last sigh. To the bitter regret of his loss was added the chagrin of the frightful situation in which we were left. A mean stock of furniture, with a few trinkets of no value, was all that remained to us of my father.

After the moments dedicated to grief, the persons who took an interest in us, or pretended to do so, advised us to go to Paris. There we should find, they told us, infallible resources. On the one side, my uncle Ange Gomart, who had been for some time in the monastery of Picpus, and on the other, M. Billard du Monceau, my godfather, were bound decidedly to assist us at this juncture. Moreover, our ambition was necessarily bounded, and consequently easily satisfied. My opinion was not asked, as you may readily believe; I was only told that I was going to Paris, but Paris was to me, as to all the other children of the province, a perfect paradise. I pictured to myself a city of pearls and gold; I was delighted with the idea of going to Paris.

We started; a conveyance took us by short stages—short stages in every sense of the word—but yet I was not at all wearied. If my mother shed tears at times, I wiped them from her eyes, or wept to see her weep. After a time my gaiety returned: at my age, eight years, we have before us so unlimited an extent of horizon, the future promises so fairly, and besides, I was so much delighted to be travelling in a coach! At last, after being a fortnight on the road, we reached Paris; never can I forget the effect which the first

François R. Molé

From Picture by Leyravil



[redacted]

sight of this vast city made on me. The extent of the streets, the height and gloom of the houses struck me with fear, but the crowd of people perpetually moving soon drove away these ideas. "Mamma! mamma!" I cried out with all my voice, and clasping my hands together, "it is fair day!" This notion originated in my never having seen so many shopkeepers and so many people at Vaucouleurs except at fair time. We went to live in the environs of the Place Royale, in a street of which I forget the name, but remember well that it was sad, dull and silent. Apartments were cheap, and we were not far from the monastery of Picpus, in which, as I have already said, resided the Père Ange Gomart de Vaubernier. My mother informed him of our arrival, and he came to see us on the following day. I remember that my mother wept much whilst the monk preserved a calm air—his piety, he said, forbade any outward demonstrations of inward sorrow. I believe, for my own part, that he felt but little regret for his brother, and much embarrassment from his sister-in-law and niece. However, he allowed nothing of this to appear; he told me, after an embrace, that I had the face of a cherub, and advised my mother not to lose a moment in soliciting the protection of M. Billard du Monceau. He offered most heroically to accompany us on the first visit, which would be decisive.

My lovely face, my locks, which waved most enchantingly over my eyes, which were melting, sparkling and liquid as crystal, my mouth, small and red as a cherry, my delicately formed nose, my excessively fair skin, my elegant and sylph-like figure, in fact, the perfect beauty of my person, made my mother conceive the greatest hopes of success. "She is so lovely," said she, "that her godfather cannot abandon her." My uncle, for his part, had equal expectations; whilst I feared that I should not realise their wishes, and I told them so most ingenuously. They reassured me, instructed me, and when my mother had dressed me as becomingly as my scanty wardrobe would allow, we went most magnificently in a hackney coach, for which my uncle paid. We reached the house, and went upstairs. Good heavens! how much was I dazzled on

entering the rich apartment! I had never seen anything like it at Vaucouleurs, not even at Madame Dubreuil's, my god-mother. The beautiful ornaments! the handsome carpets! I dared not walk over them. What glasses! what furniture! what porcelain! I looked at everything, I admired everything. I was all eyes, as the saying is.

Here we were, then, in the private apartment of M. Billard du Monceau. The Père Ange, who was the most eloquent of the party, opened the conversation. After having said who we were, he began a tolerably long sermon on charity, which he terminated by saying that M. Billard du Monceau ought to be our Providence, and that in the quality of my spiritual father, which he had taken upon himself at my baptism, he was obliged to fulfil the duties of my temporal father. My mother strengthened this harangue by her tears, and I was about to weep in my turn, when a handsome spaniel came up to me, and, suddenly arresting my sensibility, I began to play with him without any feeling of uneasiness or embarrassment.

When the Père Ange had finished speaking, M. Billard du Monceau said some words of consolation to my mother, and put ten louis into her hand, saying, delicately, that they were to purchase sweetmeats for me. He undertook, besides, to defray the expenses of my education, and promised my mother to procure for her the situation of housekeeper in some high family; he then wrote down our address and took leave of us, requesting Père Ange to call again to see him.

My mother left the house of M. Billard du Monceau more satisfied respecting my fate and her own. The following week Père Ange came to inform us that our Providence had found a situation for my mother in the family of Madame de Renage, widow of a farmer-general. But I could not accompany my mother to the house of this lady, because she did not like children. This was a fresh difficulty, and my uncle again called on M. Billard, who gave a fresh testimony of sympathy. I was placed by his kindness in a boarding-school in the Rue des Lions Saint-Paul. It was in this academy that my education was commenced, and consequently I have

not many pleasurable associations connected with it. There I learnt to sew, of which I knew but little previously, as well as to mark and embroider. They taught me how to read and write tolerably; I was instructed in the catechism of Fleury, the Bible, and more especially in arithmetic. Here is a list of accomplishments, my friend! Well, my instruction, lodging and food only cost thirty livres per month.

In this house I passed two or three years. My mother continued at Madame de Renage's, who, from some old woman's obstinacy, would never consent to my setting foot in her house. Wretched as was the temper and disposition of this woman, yet my mother endured her patiently for some time, but at length her ill-humour made my mother's life so miserable that she found herself compelled to give up the idea of remaining any longer in her house. She went to my godfather and entreated him to remove her from this hell upon earth. M. Billard du Monceau then placed her with Mademoiselle Frederic, celebrated throughout Paris for her beauty, and at this time the mistress of my godfather. My mother would certainly have refused the situation if she had dared, and hesitated about it for some time, but not caring to displease the only protector we had (for whom had we else in the wide world?), she accepted it for that reason, or rather from her fears. If my mother was not much flattered at entering the house of Mademoiselle Frederic, that lady, on her side, did not receive her with much satisfaction. She imagined that my mother was a sort of Argus, employed to give an account of her behaviour to her lover; however, she did not testify this discontent at first; that would have been bad policy.

What was I doing all this time? My godfather, who was attached to me, although he only saw me occasionally, had taken me from the school where he first placed me, and I was sent to the convent of Sainte-Aure. This convent was temporally and spiritually directed by the Abbé Grisel, the same whom Voltaire so happily ridiculed. I was a gainer by this change, for my education was somewhat more carefully attended to at the convent of Sainte-Aure than it had been

in the Rue des Lions Saint-Paul. I had here masters for all accomplishments, and applied myself particularly to drawing, for which I had considerable taste.

I was fifteen years of age and very lovely, more so than any of the young ladies of Sainte-Aure, but I was at the same time so free from affectation, so gay, so lively, so loveable, that they excused the loveliness of my countenance in consequence of the goodness of my heart. Besides, we were all united by the irksomeness of a convent life. Our common wishes tended towards the moment when we should quit this holy prison. In the meanwhile our comfort was in conversing about what was going on outside the walls. My associates were not young women of noble families; they knew nothing of what was doing at Court; but then they were acquainted with myriads of anecdotes, which were not the less scandalous because they were plebeian. These anecdotes, which they brought from their homes, were told with the utmost minuteness and unction, and how did we stretch our imaginations to comprehend them fully! How did I envy the lot of those who had heard all these amusing histories out of the convent! Under what brilliant colours did I paint to myself the life of the world! my poor little head was bewildered; my imagination darted forth unbridled, and betook itself to some of the loftiest possible castles in the air! What fêtes did I have there! At a later period I have found in reality these splendid edifices, which, in the dreams of my early youth, I so joyously inhabited. Homage, pleasure, exalted lovers, I found then all that I had formerly coveted—all, all was there but true happiness, which I had, perhaps, forgotten to wish for.

I formed at Sainte-Aure a close intimacy with a boarder of my own age, tall, and a brunette, named Geneviève Mathon. Her father was the most celebrated pastrycook in the Rue Saint-Martin. What a good creature was Geneviève! How much did she tell me of the good dinners at her father's house! How did she invite me to taste them by anticipation as soon as we should be freed from our present confinement! I did go afterwards, and evil followed my

visit. Why? This is not the moment to answer the question.

Another of my companions testified attachment to me also, but with much more calculation and dignity. Brigitte Rubert, that was the name of the boarder, a very agreeable girl in some respects, conducted herself haughtily towards me because my mother was in service. It was in vain that I insisted on her being a housekeeper. Mademoiselle Brigitte, the daughter of an attorney-at-law, demeaned herself always like a high-born dame, and I, like a fool, liked her better than all the world beside. The worthy Geneviève Mathon was rather jealous of the preference; but if Geneviève was not my best beloved friend, I was always the best beloved friend of Geneviève.

I should amuse you, perhaps, were I to detail all the freaks by which we shortened the time of our retreat. We were indeed "Pickles" in petticoats, and, what is worse, downright hypocrites. But we are all so—we are always so—we women. Thanks to the education you men-folk give us, we learn to cheat you whenever we choose, and the greatest fool of us all can make you believe that black is white.

However, I will tell you, and that with the utmost truth, that I was still *innocent*. There was a something passing within me which told me that I was not formed to live alone but that was all I knew. With the vague ideas of my age, I had always the candour of a child. I only expected from marriage tender caresses and paternal kisses. I insist on this point, because vile pamphleteers, whose silence I would not pay for, have horribly calumniated me. Even my infancy—that pure age which should ever be respected—my very infancy has been placed in a disgusting light. They have made me a monster; my best friends have read the horrid libels, and you, perchance, first of any. Am I wrong in suspecting this? Forgive me; but I have lived so long at Versailles, and amongst courtiers, that I must be allowed to be mistrustful. I doubted the friendship of no person on the day I left Sainte-Aure. Since! No, my friend, I do not doubt yours.

CHAPTER II

Mademoiselle Frederic again—Madame du Barri goes to the house of a milliner—She resigns her family name—Visit to the convent—Visit to Geneviève Mathon—Nicolas Mathon: first love—The Marquis d'Aubuisson: second love—The *mousquetaire*: third love—Regrets.

If I were not happy at Sainte-Aure, my life at least was tranquil, and glided on without great troubles and without great pleasures. Geneviève Mathon and Brigitte Rubert satisfied my heart. I loved and was beloved, or at least I believed so, which is the same thing. I had been to Mass some time, when one day my mother came to the convent and told me, with tears in her eyes, that she was going to leave Mademoiselle Frederic's house. The unkind treatment of this lady compelled her to quit her. My mother told me nothing further, and it was only at a subsequent period that I learned the cause of this rupture, which was maliciously detailed by the author of a book entitled "Anecdotes sur la Comtesse du Barri." In this work, which is from beginning to end a tissue of calumnies, it is stated that Mademoiselle Frederic, in the presence of M. Billard du Monceau, accused Madame Gomart of living with the Père Ange, her brother-in-law. It is false—it is an atrocious lie. Mademoiselle Frederic only complained that her pretended housekeeper was set over her as a spy upon her conduct. This she roundly asserted, and insisted on the dismissal of my mother. M. Billard du Monceau easily saw through the accusation; but he was old, and in love, and complied with the demand. My mother therefore left the service of Mademoiselle Frederic to enter into another family, and I, notwithstanding what my enemies may have

said to the contrary, remained at Sainte-Aure until my sixteenth year.

At this epoch my godfather, who had not forsaken me, and of whose conduct towards me I must ever speak in commendatory terms, having taken me from the convent, enquired into my wishes and what situation I wished to be placed in. In accordance with my replies, I was apprenticed to Madame Labille, milliner, in the Rue Saint-Honoré, near the Oratoire and the Barrière des Sergents. I now commenced a new existence, and how different a one from that I had led at Sainte-Aure! There all was wearisome and dull; there the least motion, a word, a burst of laughter, were kept in check, and we sometimes severely punished. At Madame Labille's there was a constant watch to keep the house in order and regularity; but how different from the unceasing surveillance of the convent! Here we were almost mistresses of our own actions, provided that our allotted portions of work were properly done. We might talk of anything that came into our heads; we were at liberty to laugh at anything that provoked our mirth, and we might sing as much as we pleased; and we did chatter, laugh and sing to an unlimited extent. Out of the shop on Sunday we were at perfect liberty, and at equal liberty in our chambers, which were situated at the top of the house; each of us had her own, which was small but very neat. My godfather had mine decorated with a handsome carpet, and gave me a commode, a pier-glass, a small table, four chairs and an arm-chair of velvet, magnificently gilt. This was all luxury, and when my fellow-apprentices came to see my apartment, the richness of the furniture excited surprise and universal admiration. For four-and-twenty hours, at least, the sole theme of conversation at Madame Labille's was the chamber of Mademoiselle Lançon—that was the name by which I was known in my new abode. You had given up your own then? I hear you enquire. Yes. And why? I will tell you. The Père Ange Gomart, who had his share of vanity, monk as he was, unwilling that it should be known that he had a niece a milliner, made me give up my paternal name, hoping

that thus our relationship would not be detected; he perhaps also hoped to put an end in this way to the family name at the moment when he saw his sister-in-law about to be married a second time. In fact, a very short time after my establishment at Madame Labille's, my mother was married to a M. Roulon. This man was an unfeeling brute, and his ill-treatment no doubt hastened the death of my mother, whom I had the misfortune to lose some time before my introduction to the Château. But to resume the thread of my discourse.

I was installed under the name of Mademoiselle Lançon, at the house of a fashionable *modiste*, and then I was almost emancipated, almost free. Besides, on the Sunday, which was entirely at our own disposal when we were not left in charge of the shop, we went out very frequently to carry articles of millinery which had been ordered. My first walks in Paris were not taken without fear; however, on the second Sunday of my new existence, I formed the bold project of paying a visit to my former friends of Sainte-Aure. One, Brigitte Rubert, was still at the convent; the other, my good Geneviève Mathon, had left it a week before me to return to her paternal home.

I went first to the convent, where my visit caused a kind of disturbance. My worldly attire, my easy air, my mien of a milliner's girl, scandalised all the establishment from the highest to the lowest, from the gate-keeper to the superior. I was compelled to promise to conduct myself carefully, to renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, &c., and was constrained to give ear to a lengthened and tiresome sermonising. I was impatient to see Brigitte, and at length Brigitte arrived, but more frigid, icy and distant than ever. I ran towards her, and throwing my arms about her neck, wept and called her my dearest friend. Brigitte barely gave me a chilling kiss, then disengaging herself from my embrace, asked me with great dignity what I had done with myself, and what I had been doing since I had left Sainte-Aure. Thinking that I had nothing to conceal from Brigitte I told her all; but she, when she heard it, exclaimed:

"Ah, mademoiselle, you are a workwoman now. Well, go on your way; I promise you all my work when you start on your own account." These words, the *vous* (you) which was used instead of our former *tu* (thou) and *toi* (thee), confounded me. The big tears coursed down my cheeks from my beautiful eyes; I was choked.

"Ah, Brigitte," I replied at length, in a mild tone, "what have I done to make you speak thus to me? Am I no longer your friend?"

"Mademoiselle," was the reply, with the most haughty tone of voice, "I shall always take an interest in you, but on the point of marriage with a pleader at Châtelet, I cannot continue a friendship with a little needlewoman."

"And you are right!" I exclaimed angrily, "there can be nothing in common between an honest workwoman and the insolent daughter of an attorney. Good morning, mademoiselle." I left her with these words, and quitted the convent never to enter it again.

On reaching the street I shed tears again, but they were tears of rage. This first visit had deprived me of all desire to attempt the second. I did not feel the least inclination to go and find Geneviève Mathon. "Who knows," said I to myself, "if pastrycooks are not as proud as attorneys? Perhaps Geneviève will receive me with all possible grandeur, and testify the utmost disdain.

However, the desire of forgetting my affront and the remembrance of Geneviève's good heart emboldened me; I went on, not without fear, it is true, until I reached her dwelling. I entered and saw Geneviève occupied in her father's kitchen. She saw me, and jumping with joy, ran to me and covered me with kisses; such was my reception, about which I had had so many fears. She introduced me to her family, who gave me an invitation to dinner, which I accepted. Opposite to me was seated a tall, handsome young man, with dark eyes and brown hair like Geneviève's. It was her brother. Perhaps it was because I loved his sister that I so soon felt a liking for him. I looked at him from the corner of my eye as secretly as possible and found his glance

was fixed on me. He anticipated my slightest wishes, and offered me beforehand what I was about to ask for. I wished to drink, and instantly he poured out wine for me. I desired some particular morsel, and the same moment I found it on my plate. His attentions embarrassed me, for I feared lest his family should consider them as peculiar; but they took no notice, or rather viewed it only as a natural and proper gallantry. At the end of the repast, Geneviève, who had only thought up to that time of the pleasure of seeing me again, asked me somewhat abruptly what I was doing. The enquiry troubled me, and I replied to it trembling with embarrassment, so much did I dread a repetition of the scene with Brigitte; but my answer produced no such effect. These worthy people thought it quite well enough that I was a milliner, since I was nothing else. The family kept me as long as they could. They took me for a walk on the boulevards, and after the walk we went to the theatre. It was the first time such a pleasure had been presented to me; it so completely laid hold of my mind and imagination that I almost forgot the presence of the brother of Geneviève. He, who was more accustomed than I to the amusements of a theatre, saw only me, looked only at me. Seated by my side, he was only thinking how he should express his love for me. He spoke to me with passion, in a language till then unknown to me, but which seemed to me delightful and equally charming to my ear and my heart. One instant (when no one was observing us) he attempted to squeeze my hand; and I, without reflection, without intention, I assure you, lightly returned the pressure of the hand which retained mine. He trembled, and then his countenance beamed; his large, black eyes sparkled like fire, and a beautiful smile played upon his lips.

This day of enchantment, this delicious evening had its termination. My friend and her brother wished to escort me back to Madame Labille's. Geneviève, on quitting me, embraced me; Nicolas Mathon, still timid, contented himself with kissing my hand. This kiss penetrated to my heart.

I ascended the staircase with slow steps. On reaching

my chamber I became excessively pensive. I was in love! I think, my friend, I see you knit your brow, assume a disdainful look, and say to me, "What! you, madam, love Nicolas Mathon, a pastrycook's apprentice! Fie, fie on you, Countess!" Excuse me, sire, you know not what you are talking of. When I became the Comtesse du Barri I knew how to select a lover of exalted rank; but now I was only a modest milliner's girl—I was only Jenny Lançon. Well, now, at the present time, such as fortune has made me, when I call to remembrance all those who have adored me, shall I say that it is not poor Nicolas, perhaps, who pleased me least. I too have known what first love is!

The image of Geneviève's brother pursued me sleeping or waking. Half the night was spent in a long sleeplessness. At length I fell asleep, and the adored image appeared to me in my dream. It seems to me that, in writing these lines, my recollections render me once again innocent and happy. Let me relate my tale somewhat more at length.

The next day, when I had to go into the shop, I had lost my liveliness; my usual buoyancy of spirits had forsaken me; I was dull and pensive. This change astonished my companions, who enquired the cause of my evident depression. I blushed, stammered, hesitated, and at last explained myself so ill that the young ladies of the shop, who had great experience in such matters, were unanimously of opinion that I was in love. I denied it as well as I could, and keeping my secret to myself, determined not to allow it to escape. At that moment I raised my eyes, and through the window of the shop saw Nicolas Mathon, who was walking in a most melancholy mood in the Rue Saint-Honoré.

It was then that my poor little heart began to beat and palpitate in a most alarming degree; something extraordinary passed within me; my whole frame shook with emotion, and I remained stupefied, as some poet says, with my eyes fixed immovably on the young man who was walking up and down the street, and endeavoured to smile upon him. He saw me; the blood mounted to his cheek, and he showed me a paper he held in his hand—it was a letter, I felt sure; a letter

to me!—the first love-letter! How impatient was I to possess it! My virtue did not struggle for an instant with my young desire. I had indeed been advised, at Sainte-Aure, to renounce the devil; but Nicolas was an angel, and a correspondence with him I pictured to myself as the most delicious thing in existence. He continued in the street, appearing himself astonished at his own audacity. I made him a sign to approach, which he understood. A lady entered the shop, and I, profiting by the bustle which was thereby occasioned, glided into the passage, and thence gained the door in an instant. Nicolas started when he saw me so near to him. "Is it a letter from Geneviève?" I asked him, with much confidence. "Yes, mademoiselle," he replied, in a faltering voice, and gave me the letter, blushing deeply as he did so. I looked at him, left him, concealed in my corset this precious treasure, and regained the shop before my absence had been perceived.

But it was not all to have the letter; it must be read, too—and how? I could not go up into my room, that was out of rule; and to retire again would have caused a suspicion. At length, after dinner, a favourable moment presented itself. I read it. He told me that he loved me. I knew that before: no matter, I was happy. The poor young man! I must answer him. At the same moment I took up a pen; I could not write, and put it off till the next morning. The next morning came, and at daybreak I was at work. I began, and began again, ten letters, each more foolish than the other. At length I framed this, which contented me for want of a better, and which I remember verbatim, for it was short:

"Sir,—You love me, you say, and wish me to love you. I love Geneviève so much, that it will be no difficulty for me to love her brother. You promise to live only for me. I will confess to you that this promise gives me great pleasure. But now wretched should I be were I to believe you, and you did not keep to your word! I am, perhaps, saying too much. Adieu, sir, I am ashamed; but I am frank and sincere, and you will not abuse the confidence of your

sister's friend." I signed this letter, concealed it in my bosom, and descended quickly to the shop.

I was certain that M. Nicolas would not delay coming again to the house, nor was I mistaken; for about ten o'clock he was at his post. The moment he ascertained that I had seen him, he crossed the street, came to our side of the way, and, as on the previous evening, placed himself at the door. This time, without leaving the shop, I contrived to throw the letter to him, which he picked up, and then departed triumphantly. From that time, every morning and every evening he passed the shop. Matters went on thus until the following Sunday. With what impatience I awaited this happy hour! something whispered to me that on that day I should see Nicolas before Geneviève.

At length this Sunday, so ardently longed for, arrived. I dressed myself as becomingly as possible, and consulted my glass a long time, to convince myself that I should please. I was pretty, very pretty. The hour of our emancipation arrived. Madame Labille had gone early in the morning with her family to Versailles to see some fête. I let all my companions go out before me, and each was awaited in the street, one by a brother, another by an uncle, the third by a cousin. I went out the last, and scarcely set foot in the street when I looked about me on all sides. Nobody. I was walking by chance, and pensively, towards the Rue de la Ferronerie, when suddenly I heard behind me someone walking, who sighed. I stopped, turned round; it was Nicolas! He accosted me, and I passed with him all this happy and innocent day, and afterwards found opportunities of giving him many meetings. Our interviews were brief but delightful. I thought really that I was the happiest of women, and Nicolas obtained all from me. He owed this only to a true feeling, and I am certain he was not the less willing to marry me.

My companions and I became more familiar in proportion as we knew each other better; we then communicated mutually our loves and the names of our respective lovers. I blush even now when I think of the bursts of laughter

which accompanied the name of Nicolas Mathon, a pastry-cook's apprentice in the Rue Saint-Martin, at the sign of the *Bonne Foi*. The contempt of these ladies was visibly expressed; they all had illustrious adorers. They were notaries' clerks, barristers' clerks, students or soldiers. They exclaimed loudly against the lowness of my taste. In vain did I defend my dear Nicolas, boast of his elegant figure, pleasing manners; nothing could stop their ridicule. They represented to me that, at the carnival, they would have an opportunity of going to a ball, but that my lover must not pretend to the honour of walking beside their gentlemen, and that I should see myself compelled to stay at home.

This, I confess, humbled me—me who had entered Geneviève's abode with such modest ideas! In my folly I disliked Nicolas, because he had not a gentlemanly air. I really think I would have bartered half my existence for him to have been a lawyer's clerk. Whilst these ideas were disturbing my brain, a *mousquetaire* entered the shop with much importance. I never saw any person more grand, more inflated, than the Comte d'Aubuisson, for that was the name of this hero, who, himself alone, made more noise than a whole regiment. His insolence, which I took for grandeur, had a prodigious effect upon me. He came to order the prompt completion of a hat for the Duchesse de Villeroi. The Comte d'Aubuisson was little, but well made, with a handsome face; not very bright in intellect, but perfectly satisfied with himself and all he did, considering himself as the most noble, most amiable and finest man of his day.

There was not one of the girls at Madame Labille's who did not desire to attract the *mousquetaire*. I had the honour to obtain the preference; he told me so, and that with so lofty an air that I dared not tell him that my heart was another's. My companions, irritated at my conquest, increased it in my eyes by their clumsy ridicule; they expressed their fears lest there should be a duel between the *mousquetaire* and the journeyman pastrycook. I only laughed at their jealousy, which I resolved to increase. Besides, how could I resist a *mousquetaire*, who perhaps sacrificed a duchess to me, perhaps

ten, and as many countesses and marchionesses? Poor Nicolas was then forsaken. I forgot that with him an honourable marriage would crown our loves. Had I listened to my heart it would have guided me wisely, but I abandoned myself to my vanity, and my vanity destroyed me.

As much as my first lover had endeavoured to preserve my reputation, so much did the second aim at compromising it. He had neither peace nor rest until he had completely blazoned the affair to the whole world. I lent myself to all his whims; I went to see him at the quarters of the *mousquetaires*, and then he introduced me to his comrades, who congratulated him on the conquest of so pretty a girl. I know not what I did; my head was no longer my own. In vain did Madame Labille, who loved me sincerely, give me good advice; I listened to nothing, I would hear nothing; and no more attended to my good and prudent mother, whom my calumniators have accused in this particular. They are liars.

The Comte d'Aubuisson did not love me, and I found it out when it was too late to profit by it. I resolved, however, to show him that I had no more attachment to him than he had to me. I left him as I had found him, through vanity. There came to join the *mousquetaires* a young Biscayan. This young man, tall, and well made besides, with beautiful eyes, pale complexion, was so timid and so simple that his companions treated him with sovereign contempt. Well! it was on him that I cast my eyes to satisfy my vengeance. "There is no worse water," says the proverb, "than stagnant water." The proverb is correct. This *mousquetaire*, so cold in appearance, was ardent, bold. He saw that I wanted an avenger, and offered himself. I had reason to be content. Our connection was not lasting. My new lover having learnt the death of his father, was obliged to leave me. He was the third.

I know, my friend, that you are curious to know the history of my presentation at Versailles, wherefore I hasten on to that epoch. However, I cannot entirely pass over in silence the time which elapsed between the period of my youth and that of my entry at the Château. You must learn

by what degradation I reached such a pitch of greatness; you may rely on it that I will glide over this part of my life as briefly as possible.

But before I continue my recital, allow me, my friend, to pause one moment to cast a glance over the past, and not relinquish without a last regret that humble lover who never dreamed of having a King for his successor. Alas! with him the title of wife awaited me, the delights of a domestic life, in an obscure station certainly, but with an honoured appellation, with unalloyed happiness, and free from remorse. My infidelity led me on from fault to fault to the lowest steps of the throne. I have seen at my feet a monarch and a crowd of courtiers. What glory! you will say. I was satisfied; but although I have sometimes been vain of it, I know not why, it seems to me that could I again become the little needlewoman of former days, and be enabled again to commence my career, I should not have the same ambition nor the same vanity. Do not be surprised at this species of contradiction in my mode of seeing and feeling: they are only the result of disgust and satiety. I have formerly felt precisely the same when on the eve of doing wrong; but I was young and foolish; I had no ear for good advice and good dictates. I quit my useless moralising and return to my levity of heart and head and my faults, to continue the confidence I am reposing in you.

CHAPTER III

Madame du Barri enters the service of Madame de Lagarde—Society of the house—The two sons of this lady—Their portraits—Double intrigue—Marmontel—Grimm—Diderot—D'Alembert—A word concerning Voltaire—Termination of the double intrigue—Noel—Nocturnal scene—Jealousy—Catastrophe—Madame du Barri leaves the house of Madame de Lagarde.

I HAD attained my eighteenth year. Père Ange Gomar* was not satisfied with me; he wished me to lead a steadier life, and did not spare his remonstrances and advice. He had for some time quitted his convent to enter the order of secular priests; his bad health had compelled him to this. My enemies, calumniating as usual, have asserted that this bad health was the result of debauchery; but, I repeat it, this is not true. Père Ange was an honest ecclesiastic, and fully imbued with the duties of his state. On leaving the monastery he had entered a noble house as almoner. Madame de Lagarde, widow of a farmer-general, possessed, at the Cour-Neuve, a superb country-house. My uncle was this lady's almoner, and in his capacity had much influence over her. Père Ange imagined, to withdraw me from a dissipated life, it would be best to place me with Madame de Lagarde in capacity of companion. He managed matters so well, presented me in such a felicitous moment to this lady, who was always whimsical and pettish, that I pleased her, I know not how, and she agreed to receive me into her house. I must tell you that I did not go to her before I had been well schooled and sermonised by both uncle and mother.

I was now received in an honourable house, where the wealth of the mistress attracted a numerous and brilliant society. At first I was much embarrassed, feeling that I

was not in my place. That was natural enough; the change was too sudden for a young woman of my age, to pass from the counter of a shop, in a few hours, to a drawing-room in which the first company assembled. I was sufficiently prudent to preserve a profound silence, and to study how I could lose the commonplace habits I had contracted. Those who love me least have done me the justice to agree that I did not appear excessively embarrassed at my presentation at Versailles, and that if I were not nobly born, it could not be detected from my manners. They were much astonished at it, and did me too much honour on the occasion. A young woman, lovely and well made, needs only to give herself a little trouble, and she will, in my opinion, easily acquire the tone and manners of the society in which she is placed. Besides, the men, who make our reputation, are all disposed to show indulgence to a pretty woman. Her graces appear to them fine manners, and her beauty ease.

When considered only with regard to my education, my abode with Madame de Lagarde was of the greatest advantage to me. This lady received both males and females, the most distinguished in the city and Court. The highest nobility, who wanted to dip into her purse, often came to visit her. I studied them, listened to them, and with so much effect that in a short time I could talk and comport myself without appearing ridiculous. I had one of those faces and figures that are everywhere admired. The two sexes who met at my mistress's house examined me closely; mine with the desire of finding fault, and yours, my friend, with the desire, not less lively, of making me commit myself, and so carry me from the house with some *éclat*.

I saw through all—I was no novice, as you know; but what aided me in appearing so was a reserve, a hypocrisy which became me well. By my frigid and calm air, my eyes constantly fixed on the ground, I might have been taken for a saint, or for a virgin certainly. My virtue was shortly to be put to the test.

Madame de Lagarde had two sons; the elder had suc-

ceeded his father in his post of farmer-general. He was a real Turcaret, young, insolent as a page, foolishly fond of pleasure, generous without nobleness, prodigal without honour. All the world accused him of being a miser, and that because he never knew how to spend nor bestow at proper times. He had for nobility — which, however, he sometimes displayed properly—a profound hatred, which, in his own house, manifested itself at every moment, in every word. As for the rest, he was really good, and there would have been excellent qualities in him, had not his mother spoiled him in his infancy, and the flatterers of his fortune subsequently.

His brother, a *maître des requêtes*, called M. Dudelay, was the wit of the family; always powdered, curled and trimly dressed; precise in his movements, his conversation and his attitudes. Eaten up by excessive ambition, aspiring to the highest offices in the State, he already used a singular art of courtiership and impudence: it might be said that he was born a diplomatist. I never heard him say a word or utter a syllable unpremeditatedly. He was very fond of hearing himself speak, very much averse from being contradicted, very cautious of committing the slightest imprudence, and with a disposition naturally rough and angular, he surprised us by the amenity of his manners, the soft tone of his voice and the polish of his behaviour. All in him was the result of study and calculation. He never was sincere in his life, except perhaps once, in the love he felt for a pretty girl whom you know.

The two brothers saw me admitted into the familiarity of their house without uneasiness. My face did not alarm them; on the contrary, I soon found that I pleased them much. At first, however, they contented themselves with showing me only slight attentions, lest they should awaken the suspicions of their mother. But in her absence they recompensed themselves for the forced respect they assumed in her presence. As soon as one of them met me alone, in the garden or elsewhere, he began to paint his feelings in the most glowing colours. I listened to their advances with an innocent air,

and, as well as I remember, received their double declaration on the same day, and with but a few hours' interval. I felt no preference for either, and thus it was easy for me to behave so that neither of them was driven to despair. Besides, I was delighted to see them sigh for me; their love, in a manner, revenged me for the caprices of their mother, who, old and ugly, appeared jealous of my youth and beauty.

I was thus beloved by two brothers; and, that I might not embroil them, I so contrived that neither doubted but that I loved him with a reciprocity of affection. This rendered me a greater coquette than ever, as you will not be surprised to know, when you remember that the ladies of the farmers-general and of the Court, who came to the house, were excellent models for me. I formed myself from them, and steered my barque so well that, until the catastrophe, none of the parties interested had a suspicion of what I wished to keep them in ignorance of.

This catastrophe was close at hand. But permit me, my friend, to make a slight digression here, to describe to you some of the celebrated characters who frequented the house of Madame de Lagarde.

The first, whose name is at the tip of my pen, because I saw him yesterday, is M. Marmontel. This man never pleased me; always pedantic, always ensconced in his literary dignity; always having an air of meditation, that he might be esteemed a profound thinker. Figure to yourself a statue, one of ice, whom it froze you to approach; yet he became animated and showed fire when he recited any portions of his own compositions. There was in the house an unfortunate, whose approbation he pretended to desire most ardently. Alas! it was I. He had no pity, no mercy on me; he pursued me into the corners of the drawing-room, to treat me to his verses, which I cared nothing about, and to his prose, which made me sick. What a man was M. Marmontel! I have since heard the first circles of France laugh heartily at the *mauvais ton* of his "Moral Tales," in which he pretended to have depicted, with a master's hand, the manners of the highest classes. The Duc d'Aiguillon once said on this

subject that the aim of your literary characters, usually born in a middle sphere of life, was to speak of customs and manners of which they knew nothing. They ought, he added, to have sucked them in with their mother's milk to have known the entire delicacy of them. It is the first thing which men of the first rank acquire, and the last that the most extreme degradation can make them lose. Their excellent *ton* is in them too natural to be doubted. They enter a room, offer a chair, take snuff with a peculiar air. The Duc d'Aiguillon told us, too, that Voltaire, then the universal deity, could never entirely divest himself of his original plebeianism, and made twenty quotations to prove to us that a man who had lived with kings and the first nobility had a very bad *ton* in his works. I think the Duc d'Aiguillon was not in error; I may be wrong in my opinion of M. Marmontel, but I do not the less persist in it, although you may call me ungrateful; for there was no sort of attention he did not pay me, and I am even now giddy with the incense which he burnt on my altar.

Did you know M. Grimm? He also came to the evening parties of Madame de Lagarde; he was a cunning fox—witty, though a German, very ugly, very thin. There was in his large eyes, which were half out of his head, a sinister light, and something that prejudiced you against him, but his title to the appellation of philosopher made him to be received everywhere. M. Grimm played off the man of high feeling, and, after his adventure with Mademoiselle Fel, his sensibility had become a byword. As for me, I am sure he never loved anything in all his life, neither his friends nor his mistress: he loved himself too well for that. He was a despotic dandy. His face, which was tanned and wrinkled, he covered with white paint, and that so evidently that he was nicknamed *Tyran-le-Blanc;* never was a name better deserved or applied.

Diderot was another of the flatterers of my protectress. I say flatterers, and I do not use the word unadvisedly. Good heavens! what skill was there in his bluntness, what calculation in his enthusiasm! How did he lay out for effect!

and how much art was there in his simplicity! At the bottom an excellent man, provided his self-love was not irritated, but unfortunately his self-love was wounded on the slightest occasion.

D'Alembert, who was apparently on the closest terms with him, was, in fact, scarcely so in reality. They could not bear each other; they mutually tormented each other about their reputation, which was nearly on a par; with them the vanity of the author put to flight all philosophical modesty. M. d'Alembert was like a cat; he had agreeable little ways, engaging little manners. He exercised his malice whilst he sported, he caressed whilst he scratched, and put out a paw of velvet to the grandees whom he hated. On the other hand, he talked well, although he preached somewhat. He was feared almost as much as Voltaire, whose lieutenant-general he was. Woe to the man who offended him! he was sure to have on his flanks the whole pack of scribblers in full cry: the man was lost.

Do not be astonished, my friend, if I paint these men to you in colours different from those in which you have been accustomed to view them. That I may speak the truth, I must give my real opinion and not that of another; besides, you know, I am blunt and ignorant.

There was a man, who was not then in Paris, whose name was in the mouth of everyone; they talked of him at Sainte-Aure, at Madame Labille's, at Madame de Lagarde's—everywhere. This man, everybody's theme, was—Voltaire. What reputation did he enjoy even whilst living? What glory did he attain? This mighty genius had all eyes in France and Europe fixed upon him. For my part, I am so great an enthusiast that I would never perceive his faults. I shall again mention him to you, and will transcribe in this journal the letters he wrote to me, and which I have carefully preserved. I can assure you that if I would have given them to Beaumarchais, he would have received them with much pleasure. I did not care to do so, and thus Beaumarchais only printed what all the world knows. By means of these letters I might have set M. de Voltaire and the Choiseuls by

the ears; I have not done so, nor ever contemplated such a thing. You must confess, my friend, that I am not mischievous.

Besides the literati above mentioned, there were also at Madame de Lagarde's lords of the Court, the Maréchal de Richelieu, the Prince de Soubise, the Duc de la Trémouille, the Duc de Brissac. I shall not describe them now, nor the Comte de Lauraguais, and the Marquis de Chimène, his rival in literature; they will appear again at a later period in this journal, as well as many other personages. Do you know a very remarkable circumstance? It is this: the Duc de Richelieu displeased me the first day I saw him, and I never could get over the repugnance with which he then inspired me. Circumstances have brought us in close contact, and even placed him, I may say, at the head of my council. I then appeared to like him, but it was only in appearance. This is the only act of dissimulation with which I can be reproached during the whole of my political career, in which I conducted myself, I may venture to say, with a frankness that is uncommon. At Madame de Lagarde's M. de Richelieu flirted with me, but as if only to preserve his ancient reputation in that way. Afterwards, at Versailles, he made a talk of these gallantries to remind me of what he termed our former friendship.

I have digressed somewhat at length, and will return now to my double intrigue with the brothers Lagarde.

The elder, one fine morning, placed on my toilette a japan box containing a beautiful suite of pearls. The younger endeavoured to gain me over to his interest by presenting me, in his mother's presence, with a very handsome watch. Some days afterwards I received, at nearly the same moment, from my two adorers, a letter which invisible hands threw into my apartment. They contained endless protestations of love and unwearying offers of service—in fact, the El Dorado of "Candide," which I believed had not yet been discovered. All this was very tempting, but would have required that of which I did not feel myself capable. They begged an answer, and each indicated the spot on which I was to place it: the

elder, under a bronze vase in a corner of the garden; the other, in a wooden chest in the ante-chamber.

I was too polite to refuse an answer, but I had no wish to vary the form of my style. I wrote a letter, therefore, and copied it. The elder had the original, not from right of conquest but by right of birth. The other had the copy, but he had no cause of complaint, for the two epistles were precisely similar. Not a word more nor a word less in one than the other. In these letters I affected a most entire disinterestedness; I complained that they should doubt my virtue, and begged him who wished me well not to make me unhappy by abusing the inclination which I felt to love him. I expressed my fear of a discovery, and insisted that the most excessive prudence should be observed. But why should I demand prudence from others when I could not exercise it myself? Here, my friend, I have a painful confession to make to you; I have hesitated long about it, but as I have promised to conceal nothing from you, I will not repress this or anything else. At the same time, and in the same house, I had surrendered my heart to the handsomest scamp of a fellow, sixteen years of age, that I had ever seen. Who he was, what he did, I shall, for reasons sundry and excellent, conceal. You may press if you please, but it must suffice that I call my Adonis Noel. Noel had the impudence to tell me that he loved me, and I had the weakness not to fling him out of the window; for my situation in the mansion was that of a noble lady, and everyone except Noel had the greatest respect for Mademoiselle de Vaubernier.

When a woman allows a first impertinence she is lost, and Noel knew this. I was so wanting in respect to myself that, not to lose myself, I was compelled to submit to a compromise. Yielding to his incessant importunities, I received him at night into my chamber, with the intention of quarrelling with him, I can assure you. I slept in a small room over the courtyard, which was approached by the large staircase on the right hand, and on the left by a narrow flight of steps which descended into the courtyard and led on to the servants' apartments. One night,

when I was quarrelling with Noel, someone suddenly knocked at my door. I was alarmed, lost my presence of mind, and answered as chance dictated. A voice, which seemed like that of a woman, told me to open the door immediately, as it was Madame de Lagarde. Still more alarmed, and thinking that Noel had gone (he could have done so by the little door), I opened the door. Someone entered; it was the amorous *maître des requêtes*. He took my hand, that is Noel's, and imprinted on it a kiss. He prayed me to listen to him and not to make a noise. I uttered a cry; he in his turn became frightened, let go the hand, and tried to go out, which as he did he struck his nose against the door, which I closed as quickly as possible. The next morning, at Madame de Lagarde's, when he was endeavouring to explain how he came by the mark which decorated his nose, I could not prevent myself from laughing at him, when his languishing eyes seemed to say to me, "Cruel girl, enjoy your harshness! contemplate your victim!"

On the same day I received billets even more tender. My pardon was entreated for the great boldness, and an interview was solicited. On the other hand, the financier prayed me not to be rebellious to his vows. I was inexorable. I loved no one but Noel.

However, it was impossible to avoid the MM. de Lagarde entirely; either in the garden or the drawing-room I met them continually. They stopped me to pour forth their declarations, and perhaps at last began to suspect that each was chasing the same game. What did I not do to preserve the peace. Sometimes I gave both hopes, sometimes I made them utterly despair. Noel, to whom I sacrificed everything, made me wretched by his incessant jealousy. He was perpetually upbraiding me with my coquetry. One day he so far forgot himself as to raise his hand against me. I bore it all; I suffered the humiliation without complaint.

But my annoyances did not cease here. Noel imagined that I secretly preferred M. Dudelay to his brother, and determined to avenge himself and M. de Lagarde at once.

I had told him all, and showed him the letters they had written to me, as well as my replies, and sometimes we concocted them together at our nightly meetings. He knew, therefore, that, yielding to so much perseverance, I had accepted the rendezvous of M. Dudelay, in which I had vowed to be prudent. What does Noel? He gets a friend to write a letter to M. de Lagarde, and in this letter told him the hour and place when and where he could surprise me with his brother. I, ignorant of the treason, went to the assignation, which was in the evening, at the Salle des Marroniers. M. Dudelay was not slow in joining me, and was kissing my hand when M. de Lagarde, coming from behind a tree, advanced towards us. At the sight of him I was speechless. He reproached me with my duplicity, threw a packet of letters to his brother, and quitted us. M. Dudelay took the letters and cast his eyes over them. Imagine his vexation when he saw that these letters were precisely the same as his own. He called me all sorts of names and left me. I had gone up into my own room when they called me down to Madame de Lagarde, to whom her younger son had told all. She spoke to me as I deserved, and desired me to quit her house on the instant. In vain did I beseech and entreat her to allow me to stay that night; she was inexorable. She reiterated the order of my departure, promising to send my clothes the next morning. I must say, by the way, that she performed her promise most scrupulously; she sent not only all that was mine, but also the japan box, with the pearl ornaments and other presents, which, I confess to my honour, I had not earned.

After this catastrophe I went to my mother. My return displeased her; I wept, justified myself as well as I was able, and promised to be wiser. Although I did not think Noel had been the cause, I had almost forgotten him; at least I could have forgiven him for having forgotten me, but he came to see me. I received him coolly enough; his vanity was wounded to the quick; and to prove to me that he had punished me by anticipation, he confessed how he had acted in the affair. I was so much irritated that, assuming his

character, I gave him a box on the ear that almost knocked him down. I feared for a moment that Noel would strike me again; but not at all, he spun round on his heel and went away, never to see me again. I mistake, he did see me again subsequently, and you shall know how and when. Ah! my friend, you have exacted from me a task very difficult to fulfil.

In spite of the promise which I had made my mother, I did not behave more prudently. My entrance into the world was bad, the progress of it was like the commencement, and I led a dissipated life. A short time after this my uncle died, and gratitude for his kindness made me resolve on taking his name. It is in consequence of this that you will presently find me assuming the name of Mademoiselle Lange.

CHAPTER IV

The demoiselles Verrière, celebrated courtesans—The Chevalier de la Morlière—A *mot* of Madame du Barri's—The Chevalier d'Arc—The Prince de Soubise—M. Radix de Sainte-Foix—Women of quality addicted to gambling—The Comte Jean du Barri—The *Bal de l'Opéra*—The Duc de Lauzun—M. de Fitz-James—Madame de Mellanière.

HAD I chosen on quitting the house of Madame de Lagarde to make an appeal to some one of the rich financiers or persons of quality who frequented the house, I should at once have secured to myself an immediate station. The idea did occur to me, but did not coincide with my inclinations. Besides, the weight of the chains I should take on myself frightened me. I preferred being my own mistress, to live as I chose; and liberty, such as it was, seemed to me so sweet a thing that I would not have exchanged it for the most brilliant slavery. Not that I regretted, in one sense, the time I had passed at Madame de Lagarde's; this period had not been lost any more for my education than my pleasure. I had divested myself of the air of a shop-girl and milliner's apprentice; I had acquired the customs and forms of good society, and I could henceforward present myself anywhere I pleased without blushing.

There were then at Paris two charming sisters, the demoiselles Verrière. They bore the sceptre of the highest gallantry, and, the better to ruin their adorers, they had gaming-tables. Their *salon* was the meeting-place, if not of the best, certainly of the most brilliant society. The great lords and rich financiers abounded at their house; and as handsome women are always in requisition where there are financiers and lords, I went to the house of the demoi-

selles Verrière. It was there that I saw, for the first time, the Chevalier de la Morlière, a wretch dishonoured by a thousand villainous transactions, and who was received because he was a desperate fencer. A man of perverted talent, capable of most things, he had assumed to himself the post of tyrant of the pit at the Comédie Française. From his tall figure and sinister look, he might have been taken for the Rolando of Gil Blas. He was gallant and attentive to women, but it was only to cheat those who listened to him. He played, and always pocketed the money won, without ever handing over the money lost. Such was the Chevalier de la Morlière, whom I could not bear; but he, doubtless thinking me *come-at-able*, did me the honour to single me out. I was resolved on not concealing my sentiments towards him, and the opportunity presented itself. One evening he offered to see me home. "Take care," said I, "there is a *corps de garde* before my door." The Chevalier de la Morlière was silent. After my elevation he took his station amongst my enemies, and is one of those of whom I have the greatest right to complain. I might have revenged myself, but never did. You know, my friend, that I never solicited a *lettre de cachet;* all those which were issued on my account have been done without my connivance or order, and, if I had been consulted, it would have been contrary to my advice and wish.

Since I am in a mood to talk of celebrated personages, I must mention to you the Prince de Soubise and the Chevalier d'Arc, natural son of the Comte de Toulouse. It will not be quitting the subject I commenced upon, for the sisters Verrière were under the especial care of these gentlemen.

The Chevalier d'Arc, with refined manners, a perfect figure and countenance, and all the externals of a man of rank, was intrinsically as worthless as the Chevalier de la Morlière; he was a real *roué* in the full sense of the word. I will give you a trait of his effrontery. He had some reason—I know not what—to complain of the Duchesse de la V——, his mistress. What did he do? He cut off a portion of one of her letters, in which were some very

significant phrases with her signature, and placed it under a glass which was in the centre of a very large snuff-box, richly decorated with diamonds. He placed this trophy negligently on the table where he played, and all comers could read with ease the extravagances of the Duchess. The Chevalier asked nothing better, and it caused a most notorious scandal. The King was informed of it, and sent to the Chevalier d'Arc one of his gentlemen-in-waiting, with an order to have burnt, in his presence, the paper on the snuff-box, and what else remained of this peculiar correspondence. The whole conduct of the Chevalier accorded with this one anecdote. You know he was exiled at the conclusion of a suit which he instituted against his family, to compel them to own him, and died at Tulle in 1776 or 1777—I do not remember which year precisely. May God preserve his soul!

The Prince de Soubise was the worthy companion of the Chevalier d'Arc. In spite of his immense fortune, the charms of his wit, the mildness of his temper and the intimate confidence of the King, who favoured him, he was neither esteemed in the city nor at the Court. Never was there a more plebeian great man. Forgive the expression, but it is just. He was always to be found where there was estimation to be lost and contempt to be gained. He was not content with haunting notorious places—he supported them, and was the protector of all the famous and infamous brothels (*abbayes*) in Paris. The Duc d'Aiguillon said of him: "The Prince de Soubise has in his department the provinces Gourdan, Lenacher, &c. A bad soldier, he fought disgracefully; a debauched courtier, he spent the latter years of his life at Guimard's,[1] where he did the honours with the same pride as if he had been in the splendid mansion of his fathers. In truth, the Rohan family ruined our times—the Prince Louis, Prince Ferdinand, and before them the Prince de Soubise. What sorry scions of a race so illustrious!"

After having made this disclosure of others, I ought to

1 Mademoiselle Guimard was a celebrated opera dancer.—TRANS.

make my own. Thus, my friend, I confess to you that I did not confine myself to the character of an observer only at the house of the sisters Verrière. I formed an acquaintance with M. Radix de Sainte-Foix, a small financier, as I then learnt, and a great cheat, as I have subsequently discovered. He was gallant, witty and agreeable. After hovering about me for some time he asked me if I were free. I had the weakness to answer yes. Why not, my friend? There are times when a pretty woman cannot say no to an amiable, witty and agreeable man, and, moreover, a financier. I therefore formed a *liaison* with M. de Sainte-Foix, but his company soon disgusted me. He had projects of ambition to which he wished to make me subservient, and that did not suit me. I told the public plunderer so in plain terms. He was angry; I retorted; he desired me to quit him. I took him at his word, and with extreme unconcern again embarked on the stream of my adventurous life.

I was sure that I should not want protectors, but, as my affairs were in a tolerably good state, I was in no hurry. Feeling that I was borne out by my beauty I raised my thoughts somewhat high. I went now to the houses of many women of quality, who carried on the trade which they assert is not derogatory from nobility. Many of these ladies carried on this business, and their houses were places of agreeable resort. There were many persons there, and useful connections could be formed. There were suppers every evening, and frequently dances; nothing but pleasures and feasting. I was completely in my element.

It was in one of these houses that I met Jean du Barri, then known as the Comte de Serre. He had passed the freshness of first youth, and was about forty or five-and-forty, but, with his bad health and bad humour, might have been judged older. He was a man of good family, allied to all the first families of Gascoigne and Languedoc. He was not wealthy, and lived in that sort of aristocratic indigence so common in the provinces. The Comte de Serre had married a wife of easy and respectable circumstances, but, induced by the liveliness of his passions and the desire of pushing his

fortune, he had come to Paris, where, being without resources, he had incurred debts and paid them from the profits of the gaming-table. On the one side you would see a man of high temper, swearing like a trooper, taking coarseness for ease, a gambler, fond of women and wine, and regularly tipsy seven times a week. Reverse the coin, and you find a generous heart, with a fine taste for the arts, a player, but no blackleg (then of rare occurrence), opening his purse to whosoever needed it; and, on the least hint of a friend, ready to give the last sixpence. Such was my future brother-in-law.

Be that as it may, from our first interview he obtained a powerful ascendency over me; in vain did I seek to overcome it; I was really under the influence of a charm. The Comte Jean (by which title I shall in future designate him) thought me handsome, and proposed an unchained alliance of which he would defray all the expenses, and I was to enjoy all the pleasures. I accepted it. That independence to which I would formerly have sacrificed everything began to be irksome to me. I saw myself alone, without any protection in the world, and felt that I needed, to proceed on my way, the arm of some mature man to rest on, which would be my protection at any juncture.

Thus was I engaged with the Comte Jean; but I did not take any other name than that I had first assumed. I was still Mademoiselle Lange, and under that title was celebrated by a crowd of admirers. How many verses did I receive at this period! I could have filled a chest with them; but I burnt the whole pitilessly—as the curate of Don Quixote served his romances of chivalry. Elegies, ballads, epistles, sonnets, songs, madrigals, all went to the flames without mercy. You will, perhaps, tell me, my friend, that it was not without injustice that I was accused of never loving literature or literati. Let us return to Comte Jean.

We lodged in the Rue des Petits-Champs, opposite the Rue des Moulins. We received a great deal of company, but my companion was not at all jealous; he watched more over his own interests than my conduct. The confidence which he reposed in me was an inducement with me to de-

ceive him but seldom. Besides, he was a man of wit; he only saw what it was necessary to see, and only understood what it was requisite for him to understand; and I, thanks to this conjugal kindness, led the happiest life in the world.

One evening I went to the *Bal de l'Opéra*, and was flirting with a cavalier as handsome as Apollo and not less witty, since we learn that Apollo was a wit. The cavalier I allude to was already celebrated for the dazzling successes of his thousand and one adventures, and yet was not twenty years of age. It was the Duc de Lauzun. You knew him, you know him yet, and will not be astonished at the sudden enthusiasm with which the sight of him inspired me. No man in the world could compete with the Duc de Lauzun. His manners were of the first distinction, the "*beau idéal* of a finished gentleman," as some author says. There breathed around him an atmosphere of enchantment that was intoxicating, and to which I must confess I strived not to fall a victim.

Thanks to my mask, which gave me courage, I accosted the Duc de Lauzun. I endeavoured to excite his curiosity by sprightly sallies and coquettish manœuvres. I was desirous of pleasing, and exerted all my wit. Nor were my efforts useless. He asked my name.

"What purpose would it answer?" I enquired of him. "It would be strange to you; I am not a high-born dame."

"So much the better," said he; "you are the more likely to be pleasing."

"That is what I would wish to be. If to obtain such a happiness needs only to desire it, my love would procure it for me."

Thus did I speak, led on by the whim of the moment. I perceived that my words and the emotion with which I uttered them had charmed the Duc de Lauzun. He again entreated me to tell him who I was. I replied:

"A commonplace person."

"But who?"

"Mademoiselle Lange."

"Ah! are you that adorable one of whom Fitz-James has

spoken to me. I beseech you to take off your mask and let me see whether or not your beauty has been too highly praised."

I raised my mask.

"By heavens," he exclaimed, "you are as beautiful as your name! I should be happy were I permitted to kneel at your shrine."

I give you, word for word, the conversation that passed, in which I admired the polished manners of the Duc de Lauzun; for, after the declaration I had made, he might have talked to me cavalierly without my being entitled to complain; but his amenity was never belied; he treated all women with respect, and was, consequently, adored by them. He easily obtained access to the house of Comte Jean. I felt myself disposed to play the fool for him, when some extravagance induced him to quit me abruptly. Although my vanity was greatly piqued at this unexpected desertion, I determined to appear to console myself with Fitz-James. To spite the Duc de Lauzun, whom I loved, I gave myself up to his friend, whom I did not love. This is indeed a woman's vengeance; yet when I afterwards reflected on mine I could scarcely call it so. M. de Fitz-James had no mind, but a most wearying pretension to wit. He believed himself heir-presumptive to the Crown of England, and proved his origin by all the littlenesses, all the prejudices which had caused the sceptre to fall from the hand of James II., his grandfather. His father had played an infamous part in the affairs of the Parliament of Toulouse, and was laughed at for his military expedition against the Black Gowns.

Young Fitz-James was more than once compelled to take sword in hand to defend the paternal cause.

At this period of my life I formed an intimacy with a young female of very gentle appearance, and with a disposition as charming as her face. She came into the world to seek adventures, but without noise or disturbance, and rather by refusing attentions, which seemed troublesome to her. She was tender and loving, with chestnut hair, rosy lips, on which was the most charming smile, and large blue eyes of inexpressible serenity. She said she was of Franche-Comté,

and as we all belonged to illustrious families, she appertained to that of Grammont. She had lost her husband, a captain, and had come to Paris to solicit a pension. That was her tale, and we each had one of the kind. Madame de Mellanière lived in the Marais, Rue Porte-Foin, in a small house, in which she occupied a neat and genteel apartment.

From the time I became intimate with her, I remarked that she had changed her lover three times in two months, and always from causes independent of herself. The first, a rich Englishman, had been suddenly recalled to his own country; the second, a German baron, had been compelled to quit Paris in consequence of the uncomplaisant conduct of his creditors; and the third, a young country gentleman, had been taken by his father away from Madame de Mellanière, whom he wished to marry. I pitied my gentle friend, and she, with a charming smile, said to me, whilst lowering her large blue eyes, "I am not fortunate."

"Seek better, then," said I, "and you will find."

She did seek, but with much prudence. She repulsed a crowd of financiers, lords and lawyers; in fact, all whom other women would have rejoiced to have. It might be said that, to be welcomed by her, a man must be entirely unknown, or at least a stranger. At this juncture there was introduced to me a young Anglo-American, very rich, named Brown. This young man was well received, and remained a visitor for some time. My friend sought to please him, and succeeded. Gentle attentions, flirtations, tender billets, assignations, rapidly succeeded each other. This affair was fully in agitation, when one evening, after supper, M. Brown told us he was compelled to set out for St. Petersburg, where his father's affairs imperiously demanded his presence.

On the intelligence of his departure I was wretched about my poor friend. She had not been at our house that evening, and I determined to pay her a visit the next day to try and console her. On the morrow, therefore, I went to her residence, and being told by the porter that she was at home, ascended the staircase and rang her bell. The door was opened by her maid-servant, who knew me instantly, and exclaimed:

"Oh, mademoiselle, I am a lost woman if M. le Comte does not come to my succour."

"What terrible thing has happened?" I enquired.

"Come in, mademoiselle, and you shall see."

She closed the door upon us, told me that Madame de Mellanière was from home, led me to her bed-chamber, pushed aside her bed, and then, pressing a spring, lifted a trap concealed in the floor, and exclaimed:

"Here! look!"

I approached and looked, uttered a shriek and fainted. It was down this trap that the lovers of Madame de Mellanière successively disappeared after they had been murdered. Their carcasses were there, and a nauseating smell came up from below.

On recovering my senses, I was no longer in the fatal closet, but in the next room, into which Javotte had carried me. I was fearfully alarmed, and when I attempted to rise I was unable.

"Recover yourself," said poor Javotte; "my mistress will not return all day. She is at Sainte-Mandé, with the two wretches who are the assassins of the lovers she draws into her snares."

She then told me that she was indebted to chance alone for the discovery of the horrible secret which she disclosed to me; and, unable to keep it any longer, was about to reveal it to the police when I arrived. She thought that the Comte Jean, whose influence she exaggerated, could so arrange matters that she would not be involved.

Recovered from my first fright, I thought of M. Brown. It was necessary, as quickly as possible, to save this doomed young man from his impending fate; and I returned home, whither Javotte wished to go with me, but I persuaded her to stay till next day that her mistress's suspicions might not be roused. I must tell you that the same evening, without betraying herself, she contrived to offend her mistress so much by her impertinence that she was instantly turned away, to her great satisfaction.

I will continue this recital another day.

CHAPTER V

Madame de Mellanière again—M. de Sartines—The unknown and the prediction—Ambition of Comte Jean—The clergy—The Archbishop of Narbonne and Madame du Barri—The Comtesse de Stainville and the actor Clairval—The lady of the Maréchal Mirepoix—M. d'Orbessan—M. de Montaigu—The Baron de Puymaurin—The Baron d'Oville.

I RETURNED to my home more dead than alive. The Comte Jean, struck with the horror which was still depicted on my countenance, asked me the reason of it. As soon as I had told him what I had seen he was scarcely less terrified than myself, but instantly taking the measures which the peculiar situation demanded, he ran in haste to the Lieutenant-General of Police.

M. de Sartines, afterwards Secretary of State for Naval Affairs, was then head of the police. He filled that post from the year 1759, and had an incredible reputation for talent in this department. They tell most miraculous achievements of his. If we would listen to his admirers, they would make us believe that he knew the most profound secrets of families, detected the most expert thieves in their securest hiding-places; nothing escaped his Argus eyes or the revelations of his familiar demon.

The truth is that, after all, M. de Sartines was only acquainted with that which anyone chose to confide to him. I have been told by the King that the greater portion of those wonderful tales which have been circulated in honour of the Lieutenant of Police were but fables, or rather inventions, which he framed at his leisure to give lustre to his reputation. He paid persons who went about spreading reports of his pretended omniscience, and thus maintained himself in an

office for which he was deemed indispensable. I would not insinuate that M. de Sartines was not a clever and inventive man, and that he did not perfectly know the mechanical part of his duty, I only mean to say that he was a superior man in his department, but that he possessed none of those talents of the first order which make the great minister. What valet is that in the play who says that he is better than his reputation? M. de Sartines could not complain of his.

M. the Lieutenant-General of Police listened coolly to the deposition of Comte Jean, which I confirmed by my testimony. At each new feature in the recital he nodded his head as if he had been previously acquainted with the facts. He took notes, and sent us away with an order to preserve a profound silence, undertaking himself to preserve M. Brown from all peril. How do you suppose he went to work? He issued a *lettre de cachet* against him under an assumed name, so that in arresting him it appeared to be a mistake. In vain did the young man protest his innocence, and demand to be conveyed to the English Ambassador; he was carried off instantly from his abode to the Bastille. That done, the house of Madame Mellanière, which was situate at the angle of the streets Porte-Foin and Molay, was invested. They surprised the horrible woman with her two accomplices, the proofs of whose crimes were but too abundant. The proceedings against them were carried on in secret, as M. de Sartines was unwilling to give publicity to an affair in which his sagacity had been so grievously at fault. I have learnt, subsequently, that these three malefactors met with the death they so well deserved. As for M. Brown, he was set at liberty four days after his arrest, and the most lively expressions of regret were evinced at the mistake of which he had been the victim; and after this apology to his honour he was enjoined to quit France within forty-eight hours. The Comte Jean had scarcely time to see him and reveal all to him. M. Brown told him then that Madame de Mellanière had begged him to accompany her in a journey she intended to

make into Italy. "But," she added, "to save my reputation, pretend that you are going on your own business, that no one may suspect us. You can come and lodge with me for four or five days, and we can then commence our journey when we please."

It was by this method that she had ensnared her former lovers, who, coming to stay with her in her apartments, brought with them their jewels, money, bills of exchange —in fact all their riches; and during the night, when pleasure had sent them to sleep, they slept the slumber from which there is no awakening. This infernal machination had been so well planned, M. de Sartines has told me, that if the victim whom they strove to immolate defended himself successfully, he could only consider this nocturnal attack as the enterprise of some robbers from without, and, far from suspecting Madame de Mellanière, he would have pitied her. I never should have imagined that so much wickedness could be concealed beneath features so mild, and I have asked myself whether it would not be better that the vices of the heart should be always depicted on the countenance. No, my friend, there would then be too many ugly people.

I think I have told you a most extraordinary adventure. Well, I will tell you another which is not less so, and which, moreover, has had a singular effect upon my destiny. I flatter myself that, as far as this is concerned, it will not be without interest to you. Moreover, you need not prepare yourself to tremble this once; there is no occasion for it.

I was one day crossing the Tuileries when I saw that I was followed by a young man of very agreeable exterior. He walked close to me without accosting me until I reached the Rue du Bac. When I had paid my visit I went out, and again saw the young man, who had been standing sentinel at the door. He again accompanied me, walking by my side, but keeping a profound silence until I reached my house, facing the Rue des Moulins. I was much annoyed, and went to the window, whence I saw him in the street walking up and down and gazing from time to time

at my house. This perseverance alarmed me, and I was not more easy in the morning, when, on going out, I met my guard of the previous evening. However, I looked at him and thought his appearance prepossessing; his figure was excellent, his large black eyes sparkling and animated, his mouth handsome, and his whole air *distingué*. There was, however, in his physiognomy something mysterious and sombre which did not please me. He was clad with elegant simplicity, had a coat of sky-blue silk, with a narrow edging of gold, breeches of the same description, and a straw-coloured waistcoat embroidered with silver. The hat, sword, buckles and shoes were all in good taste, and more elegant than rich.

I looked at my unknown, and asked myself why he thus pestered me, and if he were enamoured of me, why he was so silent. I was dying with desire to enter into conversation with him, and went into the narrow walks of the Tuileries, hoping that he would then accost me—but no! he followed, accompanied me like my shadow, but still preserved unbroken silence. It was impossible for me to subdue my curiosity longer. I had a waiting-maid, a young Norman, not less giddy than myself, and almost as handsome. Her vivacity, good manners and attachment to my service had endeared her to me. She knew all my affairs, and was never tardy when it was in her power to oblige me. When I had returned home, I called Henriette, and, pointing out to her my unknown, told her of my excessive desire to know who he was and why he followed me.

"Oh! mademoiselle," said Henriette, "that is easy enough; you have only to ask him, and, with your permission, I will go at once and accost him."

"Do, Henriette; go immediately;" and I looked out through the blind of the window. She accosted the young man, talked to him with much earnestness, made him a low curtsey, and tripped away from him. I met Henriette in the antechamber. When she entered I exclaimed, "Well!"

"Well, madam, he is either a madman or a very dangerous character."

"How? What makes you think so?"

"From his conversation. He told me that he did not follow you, nor was he thinking at all about you. Why tell such lies? *Ma foi!* I mistrust the young fellow."

I formed instantly a thousand conjectures, each one ten times more ridiculous than the other. However, two days afterwards, the weather being very fine, although the morning air was cool, I resolved to walk out. It was just close upon the winter of 1767. I went towards the Tuileries, and need not say that my shadow still followed me as I walked beneath the terrace on the water's side. I resolved to ask an explanation, but the unknown kept himself at a respectful distance. I continued walking towards the Champs Elysées, when suddenly a grey and cold fog came on, which became momentarily so dense that I could not distinguish an object at four paces. However, I continued my walk, not without some alarm, when I heard someone walking close behind me. I turned round in some fear, and found myself face to face with the unknown.

"Sir," I exclaimed, "what do you seek? I have done you no harm; why do you follow me thus?"

I spoke thus, and the unknown endeavoured to force a smile. He took my hand, and after having kissed it respectfully, said to me in a voice, gentle but firm:

"Mademoiselle, promise to grant me the first reasonable favour I shall ask of you when you shall be Queen of France."

At these words I found I was talking with a madman, and instantly replied:

"Yes, sir, I will grant you what you ask when I shall be Queen of France."

I could not help smiling disdainfully as I said this, and he, perceiving it, said:

"You think me mad, I know; but, I pray you, have a better opinion of me. Adieu, mademoiselle. There will be nothing more extraordinary after your elevation than your end."

The unknown pronounced these words with an air of

inspiration, and, saluting me respectfully, disappeared in the density of the fog. From that time he ceased to persecute me. But you will say, Did you ever see him again? This you will learn if you continue to peruse my scrawls.

On my return home, my head full of this adventure, I could not forbear detailing it to Comte Jean.

"Queen of France!" said he; "that is somewhat singular. This worthy has odd ideas, but there have been things more wonderful."

"Why, Comte Jean, I begin to suspect the steadiness of your brain as much as I did his. I Queen of France? Nonsense; what can you be thinking of?"

"Why, not exactly Queen, perhaps, but ——, like Madame de Pompadour, for instance. Does that seem improbable to you?"

"There is a vast distance between the King and me."

"Yes, the distance there once was between him and the reigning favourite. Who knows? a caprice might effect all—but how to effect it? That is the devil! However, your prophet may in the meantime boast of making me pass sleepless nights."

"How? and why?"

"In devising the means of accomplishing his prophecy."

At this instant some person came in, and the conversation was dropped.

Thus, my friend, it was a prediction that inspired Comte Jean with a project which seemed to me impracticable, but which he has so successfully realised. From that instant he thought of nothing but the means by which he could make me Queen after the fashion of Madame de Pompadour. As for me, I abandoned to him the dreams of future greatness and continued to pass my life giddily, living from day to day without fear of degrading myself by anticipation.

It was during this year that I made the acquaintance of M. de Dillon, Archbishop of Narbonne. This prelate, of Irish extraction, had great ambition and no less taste for pleasure. Thus, in Paris, he divided his time into two equal parts. In the morning he employed it in intriguing for a

cardinal's hat; in the evening he intrigued with the women. The majority of the chaste prelate's colleagues did not lead a more edifying life. How amusing it was to hear M. de Tarente, M. de Phélipeaux, M. de la Roche-Aymon, and so many others, thunder from the pulpit against philosophy! But I begin to moralise. In fact, I chose my time very well to preach in my turn, but now we have other things to talk of. M. de Dillon thought me handsome, told me so, and wished to prove it. I did not experience any aversion to him, but his cassock alarmed me. However, he pestered me so much to go and dine with him at his small house in the Chaussée d'Antin, that at length I was compelled to consent. I agreed, however, only on one condition, which was that I should not be received by him as a prince of the Church, but as a colonel of dragoons. I told him that to please me he must don the military costume. He laughed till he cried at this whim, and promised consent. I promised to go to his house well disguised. On the day and at the hour fixed I went out enveloped in an immense pelisse, and, on reaching the small house, had scarcely alighted from my conveyance, when a gay colonel darted towards me and presented his hand. I then took off my pelisse and appeared clad as a grey nun. The pretended colonel stared with astonishment and stood with his mouth open. His astonishment over, we began to laugh at each other heartily, and you may judge what follies followed such a commencement. M. de Dillon declared that I was charming in this religious attire, and entreated me to pay him a second visit in the same dress. Why? think you. That he might show me off in this garb to two or three prelates of his acquaintance.

Whilst the girls in my station thus amused themselves, the ladies of the Court lost no time on their part. They did not content themselves with their equals, but sometimes chose to elevate a lover from the lower grades.

I remember the unfortunate adventure of Madame de Stainville with Clairval, the actor of the Italian theatre. Madame de Stainville was foolishly emamoured of this man, and played most fantastic tricks. Not content with re-

ceiving him at her house, night as well as day, she also went to him at the theatre. She disguised herself as a portress, washerwoman, seamstress, flattering herself that she avoided detection; but her good air and breeding were visible through the vulgar disguise, and God knows what scandal was talked about her! She braved all, and would not listen to advice. Her husband had, at first, allowed her gallantries whilst they were secret, but at length scandal would no longer allow him to remain with his eyes closed. He procured a *lettre de cachet* to confine Madame de Stainville in a convent at Nancy, and the lady was carried off on the eve of a ball given by the Maréchale de Mirepoix.

The good Maréchale, speaking to me of this affair, said, "Poor woman! I was very sorry for her; her departure completely disturbed a most delicious quadrille which I had arranged delightfully. I was not at all consoled until I found another dancer. Indeed, M. de Stainville showed very little regard for me; he might have reserved his thunderclap until the morning after my party." This was her remark, word for word. So much for your Court friendships.

M. de Stainville, whose anger was not satiated by one victim, would have let fall equal vengeance on the actor; but M. de Choiseul opposed him. "Brother," said he to the Count, "it is very little consequence to the good people of Paris that my sister-in-law is at Nancy, but they would exclaim lustily if Clairval were taken from them. He only did as any man would and should do in allowing himself to be in love and loved, and we ought not to punish him for it."

My intimacy with the Comte Jean gave me the opportunity of knowing many Gascons and Languedocians. He received at his house a multitude of gentlemen and magistrates from these provinces, who were in general well-bred and well-informed men. I shall mention amongst others the Presidents de Sénaux and d'Orbessan, the latter a learned man, and yet a man of the world. He treated me somewhat slightingly, and yet with so much grace and

urbanity that I could not complain of it. I had occasion to see him at a subsequent period, and he then made me take part in a very important act, of which I will give you information at the proper time and place. I do not forget M. de Montaigu, the worthy son of a mother whose amiable manners and wit have been most justly extolled. Another Toulousan whom I liked very much, and with whom I yet keep up an intimacy, for he did not forsake me in my disgrace, is the Baron de Puymaurin, syndic of the province of Languedoc. M. de Puymaurin, a decided lover of the fine arts, which he successfully cultivated, employed a very considerable fortune in encouraging young artists, whom he sent at his own expense to study at Paris and Rome. I have seldom seen better company than this country gentleman. He had most polished manners, a seducing exterior, a good heart, a noble soul; he was one of those who, once seen, are never forgotten.

After talking of the country gallants, I cannot forbear mentioning the most original of all originals that Paris ever produced. Figure to yourself, if it be possible, Harpagon,[1] a gambler, and you will have the Baron d'Oville before you. What a character he was at a gaming-table, always divided between the fear of losing and the hope of winning! How curious was he in his grimaces and his rages! the pencil of Callot could not have depicted such a comical fellow. The Baron d'Oville, who had 80,000 livres per annum, was always ill dressed, and went and came on foot, saying that exercise was necessary for his health. He had a nephew, to whom he gave nothing—nay, actually robbed him, and in this way:

They both lodged in the same house, and M. d'Oville went down every morning into his nephew's kitchen.

"Well, my friend," said he to the head cook, "has the madman a grand party to-day?"

"Ah, Monsieur le Baron, we must live."

"Is the dinner large?"

---

1 The miser in Molière's comedy of *L'Avare*.—TRANS.

"Twenty covers."

"And what is for dinner?" He was told. "Oh! oh!" he exclaimed; "what folly in so many side-dishes—so much roast meat! I must take care that my nephew does not ruin himself. He is my child, and I must take care that he does not ruin himself."

Then the old hunks carried off a piece of veal, some cutlets, a brace of ortolans and a pheasant, and thus dined scot-free, under pretence of economising for his nephew, who, sole heir to this miser, shut his eyes to his conduct.

One more trait of stinginess which appears singular to me. One of the old friends of M. d'Oville, unfortunate and ruined, came to him to ask his assistance. When this man had told him his misfortunes, "My friend," said the Baron, "when I resolve to serve anyone I do not do so by halves. Your existence must be assured." The old friend already blessed him. "Yes," replied Harpagon, "your existence must be cared for; therefore be easy, I will pray to God to assist you."

It was not until after many entreaties that the old friend could get a crown out of him.

As for you, my very dear and faithful sire, for whom I write this journal, I will give you no more to-day. A little patience—the moment is at hand when distinguished actors will appear upon the stage.

CHAPTER VI

Edifying advice of Comte Jean to Madame du Barri—M. Morand, the courtier of love—The Prince de Salm—Anecdote—M. de la Harpe—Mademoiselle Guimard—The dinner—Coquetries of Madame du Barri—Complaisance of M. Morand towards Lebel—The Chevalier de Resseguier—Tragical anecdote—When will M. Lebel come?—Who is M. Lebel?

COMTE JEAN had not deceived me in saying that the prophecy of my mysterious unknown would disturb his repose. He thought of nothing but how to elevate me to the throne, and to attain his ends employed, without my knowledge, an activity which would soon have wearied a man less enterprising than himself. Now, my friend, the moment has arrived when all my candour will be called in question; but it will not be painful to me, for, after all, the real details of this famous intrigue are less unfavourable than those which malignity has invented. I will show you successively, and each in his turn, the personages who have performed in this first-rate comedy, of which it may be said that, like the farces of the Italian stage, it was played by valets.

I was alone one morning in my apartment when the Comte Jean entered. He had a thoughtful air, and walked with long strides up and down, rubbing his hands and talking to himself. I should have been annoyed by the impatience and the abruptness of his movements if my penetration had not enabled me to detect in his features less of chagrin than uncertainty. I saw clearly that matters did not exactly agree with his humour; but that affected me the less; for since I had lived with him I was accustomed to these strokes of good and bad fortune; and at my age, and with my disposition, I saw no great misfortunes to stand in dread of. I

allowed him to go on without interruption, until at length he placed himself stationary before me, and, folding his hands over his breast, said:

"Well! I admire your coolness, when I am literally boiling."

"Why," I replied, "you seem in a hot bath; but why have you put yourself in one?"

"I wish the devil may choke your unknown, whose prophecy has made me grasp at a phantom. He has put an idea into my head, and I shall not be content until you have given me the King of France for a successor."

"What! still harping on that string?"

"Yes, my beauty, I think of it night and day. Already I have made a hundred fruitless attempts, and I will make a thousand others before I give up my purpose."

Then, with a species of enthusiasm, Comte Jean began to sing two lines from some opera:

Il est beau qu'un mortel jusqu'au ciel s'élève,
Il est beau même d'en tomber.

"I deny it!" cried I. "You may fall if you please, but as for me, such a distinction I do not court."

"Then you are even more mad than I thought you. Think of the brilliant destiny that you may obtain! The place of Madame de Pompadour is vacant; it is for you to take it. You become the dispenser of honours and favours; all your whims will be realised—all your caprices satisfied."

"On my word, that would be mighty agreeable! But what pretensions have I to such fortune?"

"And I," said Comte Jean, striking with his foot, after a deep oath, "I promise not to drink to satisfy my thirst, nor eat to satiate my appetite, until I am successful in this affair."

"Have you forgotten who I am?"

"A very lovely woman, capable of turning a stronger head than the King's. He must be wearied with the monotony of his amours. They only introduce virgins to him, or women who pretend to be so. Then respect twists the neck of all pleasure. They are statues—automata—

destitute of life or soul! *Morbleu!* you will know how to behave with a King."

"Oh, as to that you may be sure, King or no King, I shall alter none of my ways for him."

"Good. Now I have a favour to ask of you; it is that you will to-day look smilingly on the fool Morand."

"On whom? on that hateful creature?"

"On him, and for reasons good and potent. He is an agent whom we stand in need of."

"I think he is already in love with me."

"So much the better, for I believe that to get at the master you will have to pass through the ante-chamber." And the Comte Jean left me laughing.

But who is this M. Morand? you will ask. M. Morand is a tall, thin man, nearly six feet (French measure), with a broad, flat face, neck like a crane, legs of an ostrich, grey eyes fringed with red, a mouth which opens from ear to ear to show five or six teeth, and a vile nose crammed with snuff. He wears a coat of mulberry velvet, breeches of the same; a waistcoat covered with silver, a sword as long as Charlemagne's, and shoes laden with large silver buckles, ornamented with paste. Behold M. Morand from head to foot. What he does it is very difficult to say; it would be much easier to say what he does not. His life is a problem. In the morning, at Court, he is the valet of the King's valets; and in the evening gives suppers at his own house to the high nobility and the prettiest women. Do you know any young man, or old fellow (rich, of course), who wants a lady companion? address yourself to M. Morand; he will do the business you require in five minutes. He is a wonderful man at uniting two hearts, or calling forth mutual sympathies. Do you wish to sell any furniture? M. Morand will buy; or he will sell to you if you want to buy. He directs at one time thirty trades. He has almost genius—he certainly has that of his profession. Now you know nearly who M. Morand is. I might have allowed such an animal to speak to me as the proxy of another; but on his own account—never. No, never could I have consented to make him my stepping-stone to greatness.

M. Morand came to dine at our house. There were but a few persons present. M. le Prince de Salm; M. de la Harpe, the author; the vicar of the Archbishop of Toulouse, whose name I forget; Mademoiselle Guimard, of the Opera; M. Morand, the hero of the feast; the Comte Jean, and myself; in all, seven persons. I will tell you a little about them that you never heard before.

The Prince de Salm trailed in the mud the title of a most illustrious family. He had wit enough to make his inconsistencies sometimes forgotten, but not sense enough to correct them. He spent his life in running into debt and devising expedients not to pay anybody. At this time he owed an enormous sum to a rich contractor for masonry work, and he thus contrived to induce him to suspend proceedings against him:

"My friend," he said to him, "you have a charming daughter; I can make a Princess of her. I have under my care my sister's son, a young man of the greatest promise, but who is dying of consumption. I expect him in Paris daily. I am his guardian, and have great influence with him. I undertake to make him espouse your daughter on his death-bed. We will celebrate the marriage *in extremis*. After that your daughter will be a Princess, and may marry the first noble in the land."

The Prince de Salm told us this new plan at dinner, adding that he had made use of this stratagem, and that in a few days he should set out for Germany, when his creditor might catch him if he could.

This was assuredly a deceit that dishonoured a Highness, but little cared he, or we either. We were no more scrupulous at Paris than at Versailles. We received many great lords, cheats, like the Prince de Salm, and many great ladies who stole like magpies and bullied like pages.

M. de la Harpe was then beginning his reputation for maliciousness and wit. He was a little man, all snarl, arrogance and gall. He bitterly hated all those he did not love, and in general he loved nobody. He was also excessively jealous of all literary reputations, great and

small: the great, because he could not attain to them; the small, because they were on an equality with his own. Be that as it may, hatched under the wings of Voltaire, he never could forgive his master his great and just glory; far from it, for he endeavoured to detract from it in the pompous eulogies he passed on him. M. Dorat was his aversion, and he was the aversion of M. Dorat. Seldom did a day pass but they reciprocally launched an epigram at each other, the one smelling of pedantry and the other of musk. I believe they never did each other any mischief. At the epoch I am describing, M. de la Harpe had already produced at the Comédie Française his *Warwick*, *Gustave*, and *Timoleon*. I lost sight of him afterwards. At this period they accorded him much taste but denied him any real talent.

Who did not know Mademoiselle Guimard, at that time mistress of M. de Soubise, of M. de Laborde, of a prelate, &c.? This lady was a gulf, capable of swallowing up all the wealth of Europe. Never was there such luxury heard of as she displayed in her vast and magnificent drawing-rooms in the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, which were the rendezvous of the most brilliant society. The great ladies who came and did not wish to be seen were stationed in boxes with blinds, which were constructed all around as at a theatre.

Mademoiselle Guimard was fair, tall and thin as a spider; her face was lovely when she forgot to set it in prim order. She had much grace in her attitudes, and great ease in her gestures. She danced exquisitely, and was not vain of it; but she sang very badly, and was as proud of it as a peacock. Her enemies called her very stupid, her friends very witty, and both were in error. The fact is that she often said a good thing, but always spoiled it by her manner of giving utterance to it. The persons of her rank in life could not bear her, because of her enviable situation. I only was not at all jealous. When I went to her parties I was as contented as if I had given them myself. As she always received me with attention, I

returned it by inviting her to dine with me from time to time, and she came for the last time on the very day of the ceremonious reception of the great Morand.

I had placed him, not beside me but opposite, that I might the better point my batteries. We should always attack a heart by full front and not by profile. Thus the mute language of the face better reaches its destination. Remember this, by the way, my friend, as a lesson of experience.

My soft smile and tender glances made M. Morand feel ill at ease. Never had he had such a welcome; I had accustomed him to be contented with my indifference. Now the old knave was amongst the angels. He opened his little eyes as wide as possible to look languishingly, and pursed up his cavernous mouth when speaking to me in the most comical squeaking tone possible. Mademoiselle Guimard, who saw my manœuvres, did not at first know to what to attribute them. However, as the personage was known to her from head to foot, she soon drove away her ridiculous suspicions.

"Are you intending to change your abode?" she said, stooping towards me.

"Yes," I replied, "I am looking out for a better."

"Ah! good. And M. Morand will be the one to feather your nest."

"Precisely so."

"Ah! I thought as much."

After dinner I continued to play my part. The poor Morand could scarcely contain himself; he kept fidgeting and hovering about me like a leveret round its form. At length, seeing an arm-chair vacant beside me, he flung himself into it, and whispered in my ear with a tone of transport:

"You are charming!" Then returning to his pristine demureness, he continued: "Yes, charming; a hundred times too much so for an old sinner like me. But there is in France a man whose acquaintance would be very useful to you."

"Name him."

"M. Lebel; he is a gallant, gay, fervent adorer of the fair sex, and can be of infinite service to them."

"I should think that he would not take the field but for the service of some high and puissant lord."

"You mistake, he often hunts for his own pleasure. Nobody knows him better than I do. I am his intimate friend; we are connected in many transactions, and I will bring him to see you."

"Anything from your hand will be acceptable."

"And you will do well, for the protection of such a man will be of great service to you. But *mum* on all I have said; do not utter a syllable to Comte Jean: he is a brute!" At these words he rose and left the arm-chair.

Whilst M. Morand was preparing to go out, the Chevalier Resseguier came in. This Toulousan, a relation of Comte Jean's, had the reputation of a man of talent, without being precisely a literary man. All his jokes produced an effect, and all his epigrams told well. Madame de Pompadour had sent him to the Bastille for a quatrain he composed against her. As for me, who did not fear him, I saw him with pleasure; his causticity pleased me. M. de la Harpe detested him, so much so that he left with M. Morand the moment the Chevalier de Resseguier appeared.

When these gentlemen had gone, the Chevalier told us of a horrid crime that had just been committed in Languedoc. This tale being but little known, perhaps you will not be sorry to know it. I will tell it in few words.

Mademoiselle de Last——, who had reached her eighteenth year without being married, was passing her time irksomely in the paternal château. She was of opinion that the gardener's son was as well made as the best gentleman of the province, and evincing her passion for him, after some time became pregnant through his assistance. Several months passed away; at length she was compelled to disclose her situation to the housekeeper. Fortunately, M. de Last——, the father, was detained at Toulouse. She hoped to conceal the fatal secret from him. The day of her delivery at length arrived, and she gave birth to a well-formed *dead*

child. The young gardener buried it himself in the neighbourhood of the château, but carelessly, as if he were sowing asparagus. They trusted that all had passed over for ever, when one day the house-dog, running about the ground, was observed with something like meat in his mouth; it was the hand and arm of a new-born babe! A great stir was occasioned. The judge of the place set an enquiry on foot, and he followed the track of the dog, and they discovered the carcass to which the hand and arm belonged. M. de Last——, who was informed of this, returned to his château. After having vainly questioned all the girls of the place, he sent his own daughter to a convent at Toulouse. The next morning the gardener's son was found assassinated near the house, and the housekeeper died suddenly soon afterwards. However, these two victims were not the sole possessors of the secret; the unfortunate young man had confided it to his sister. Pursuit was commenced, but I forbear to penetrate this labyrinth for fear of arriving at the family of Last——.

The recital of the Chevalier prevented me from closing an eye during the whole night, and the Comte Jean slept no better than myself, but his wakefulness had another cause. He had seen the tall M. Morand approach me the evening before and speak to me in a mysterious manner. He was impatient to know if the fish had gorged the hook. He came to me the first thing in the morning to enquire what Morand had said. I told him word for word, and Comte Jean was delighted.

"Good," said he; "all goes as it should do. This ass Morand thinks he is only working for Lebel; he shall strike better game without thinking of it. Lebel knows me already; I could bring him to my house, but would rather he came of his own accord. My dear Jeannette" (this was the name he gave me in moments of tenderness), "be charming, be flighty, throw, if you like, your cap at the ceiling. We are playing for high stakes, and Lebel must be infatuated that a still greater man than himself may be also infatuated."

From this moment Comte Jean employed himself about

my dress with the most attentive care. He was not content with anything, and affronted my hair-dresser and corset-maker. He did not, however, employ himself with less ardour to achieve his project; he was always looking out for means, partisans, but without explaining to anyone his aim and ambition. He feared the Duc de Choiseul and the Duchesse de Grammont, his sister; the one was virtually Prime Minister, and the other, unable to conquer the heart of Louis XV., took care to have no rival near the throne. Had they had the slightest suspicion of Comte Jean, two *lettres de cachet* would soon have sent us away from the Court, and at the moment I write this the Duc de Choiseul would still govern France. But I shall have more to say of this illustrious person hereafter.

We awaited M. Lebel with incredible impatience. The *valet de chambre* of the King had immense influence with his master. He was the superintendent of the secret pleasures —no trifling affair, I can assure you, my friend. Besides, M. Lebel was powerful in his ministry; he could grant or refuse the honour of a share of the King's bed. Since the death of Madame de Pompadour he took his orders from no person. He had some deference for the person of M. le Duc de Richelieu, who, first gentleman of the bedchamber, and besides honorary *proxenète* of the Sovereign, would, I believe, willingly have erected this latter post into that of the great charge of the Crown.

CHAPTER VII

Expectation—Change of name and assumption of titles—M. de Laborde—The stage-struck cobbler—Pleasantry of Le Kain—Cailhava—Mademoiselle Clairon—Anecdote of Molé—Disguise—M. de Chabrillant—An anecdote—The Marquis de Saint-Chamond and Mademoiselle Mazarelli—Visit of Mademoiselle Verrière—Visit of Molé—The Comte Jean and Molé—A word.

The Comte Jean and myself expected Lebel with the utmost impatience. Morand had given us reason each week to expect him to visit us on the week following, but Lebel did not arrive. I certainly am indebted to him for all my good fortune; true, but there are moments when I feel myself irritated against him on reflecting upon the anxiety he then caused me. Ambition is contagious, and by dint of hearing Comte Jean say that I should please the King I had determined on persuading myself that it was so, and every delay seemed an affront to my beauty. I was astonished at his thus daring to defer the happiness of the King, or that, if they had spoken to him of me, that he was not in greater haste to offer his homage to the Comtesse du Barri.

This title and this name had been conferred on me by the Comte Jean about the month of December, 1767. As he had several brothers in Languedoc he thought he could make it credited that I was married to one of them, believing that the name of sister-in-law could give to our intimacy the excuse which he required for it. Comte Jean saw further than I did. I obeyed him, assumed my *nom de guerre*, and in this way we were prepared for whatever might happen.

I was at this period on the point of making a conquest inferior certainly to that which was destined for me, but

at which my vanity would not have blushed, and with which my heart would have been well contented. I have already told you, I think, that amongst the ostensible adorers of Mademoiselle Guimard was a M. de Laborde. This M. de Laborde was one of the first *valets de chambre* of His Majesty. He had a mania for the fine arts; he wrote music and verses, and, as he could not paint, he bought pictures, and had a very excellent museum besides. His ambition was to pass for the Mecænas of artists. Barring this little drawback, nothing but what is laudatory could be said of him. He was generous with discrimination, magnificent with taste, a man of good society, gay in season, grave when necessary. He had numerous friends, and deserved all he had. I met him at Mademoiselle Guimard's, with whom he had began to grow disgusted. He then began to flutter about me and tell me all sorts of nonsense, declaring that his head was almost turned by me.

"You would be caught now," said I, "were I to take you at your word."

"Try (*essayez*)," was his reply.

I was silent, and began playing with my fan. Someone approached me, and M. de Laborde going to another part of the room, I did not see him again that evening. The next morning I received from him a superb dressing-case, fitted up with porcelain and gold. On the lid, on a gold plate, was engraved the word *Essayez*. As the Comte Jean was there when the present was brought in to me, I could not help telling him of what had passed the previous evening. "Are you mad?" said he; "will you lend an ear to the valet when you can have the master?" In spite of Comte Jean's remonstrances, I saw M. de Laborde again to thank him for his gallant attentions, and at a subsequent period proved to him that I had not forgotten his kind partiality; and I flatter myself that I contributed not a little in enabling him to obtain his splendid fortune.

Some days after I had formed an acquaintance with M. de Laborde he obtained for me a most agreeable diversion.

There was in Paris a cobbler, neither more nor less, who, with some brethren and sisters of his craft, had been stage-struck, and gave representations of our best tragedies. Never did actors attract such crowds; great were the struggles to obtain tickets for the dramatic masquerades. M. de Laborde managed well, for he went to M. Charpentier, the cobbler-manager, and so completely talked him over that he agreed to come and play on a theatre which M. de Laborde had constructed for the purpose. The Comédie Française closed to give aid to this extravagance. Our actors performed *Zaïre*, and immense were the shouts of laughter with which this inimitable work inspired us. After *Zaïre* we had an afterpiece. M. de Laborde went to find the Orosmanes of the troupe, M. Charpentier himself, and led him forth to receive the congratulations of the audience. It was most amusing to see how he tried to repress his exultation, and play the modest. Le Kain rose, and addressing his rival with inimitable coolness, said in his deep and searching tone, "Sir, you are my master." "Oh, sir," replied the cobbler, "I do not say so; all I can assure you is that I have not studied in your school"; and everybody laughed again with increase of mirth and amusement.

This same evening Comte Jean presented a fellow-countryman to me, the comic poet Cailhava. I had seen his excellent comedy, *Le Tuteur Dupé*, and was delighted at the introduction to him. Cailhava was a fine man, with a particularly well-made leg; he carried himself erect, his eyes sparkled with wit, and his smile was full of meaning. It was evident at once that he was accustomed to please the ladies. He thought, no doubt, that he should add me to his list, but matters did not turn out as he wished.

On that very evening, and again at the house of M. de Laborde, I saw, for the first time, two dramatic stars who will always be celebrated. One had then a vast reputation, and the other attained it very soon afterwards. I mean Mademoiselle Clairon and M. Molé.

Mademoiselle Clairon quitted the stage in 1766. I need not tell you the cause of her precipitate retreat; you, as

well as all France, know it. In the last years of her glory Mademoiselle Clairon had shared the tragic sceptre with Mademoiselle Duménil. Real judges preferred her rival to herself, as being full of soul and animation; but in general the applause of the public was in favour of Mademoiselle Clairon. After having led a very dissipated life, she affected for the Comte de Valbelle a fidelity that all the world admired. But an adventure happened to her as comic as any that ever occurred to any woman, and with which we were greatly amused.

Mademoiselle Clairon had found in the son of her porter, a young man sixteen years of age, the frame of Hercules united to the beauty of Antinoüs. Enchanted at this discovery, she thought that by favouring the young man she might make him a first-rate acquisition for the Comédie Française. She gave him lessons in declamation (which were not gratuitous, however); but, unfortunately, her pupil, intended for the theatre, made his appearance in the green-room. No sooner had he set foot therein than all the ladies were desirous of giving him similar lessons to their fellow-actress. L'Amour (that was the name they had given the porter's son) was faithless to his first mistress, first in secret, and then with so much scandal that she, in her anger, withdrew her favour from him, and, what was still worse, the garments she had given to him. L'Amour, driven away from the house of Mademoiselle Clairon, ceased to be a deity; all the ladies, fearing the same ingratitude, abandoned him, and allowed him to sink into his original obscurity. This is my tale, and it is not altogether destitute of a moral.

The second person of dramatic fame whom I have to mention is Molé. Molé, still the idol of the public, the gem of the Comédie Française, when Le Kain left the stage—Molé, as agreeable in a *tête-à-tête* as he was admirable on the boards. He was introduced to me by the poet Cailhava. Ye gods! how impertinent was Molé at that time! I dare scarcely tell you how he interpreted the gracious smile with which his talent inspired me. He hovered about me, and having stealthily got hold of my hand, pressed it with a

boldness which would have irritated me, had he but given me time. He showed himself so eager and insinuating that I felt with him like one of the simplest creatures possible. I was weak enough to think, to dream of him at night. The next morning, when I arose, my faithful Henriette brought to me a little perfumed billet, in which Molé asked, in wretched style, the hour at which I should be disengaged. Reason commanded me not to reply, but I did not listen to reason. I hastened to say to Molé that a severe headache would not allow me to go out, nor to receive during the day any but persons on business. I knew Comte Jean would go to Versailles in pursuit of Lebel, and I felt desirous of seeing Molé again. Within an hour after I had written my reply I saw a lawyer enter my house—a real lawyer, by his greedy eye and pedantic step. It was Molé. When we had laughed heartily at this disguise he began to tell me the real motive of his visit. I know not what idea he had formed of my character, but, taking me, no doubt, from the title I then possessed, for a Court lady, he assailed me in the most curious manner. I was compelled to tell him flatly that his proceedings displeased me. My resistance displeased him; he did not appear accustomed to it; and, with as much coolness as folly, he told me how he had been received the first time by the Duchess of This and the Countess of That, &c. He named people by their appellations. I ought to have been indignant at such a proceeding, but caprice blinded me. I permitted him to see me again.

About the same time I became acquainted with M. the Marquis de Chabrillant. This nobleman was one of the highest players in France, only surpassed, perhaps, by MM. de la Trémouille and de Boisgelin. He told me that one day, when playing at the Café de la Régence, he sat down against an officer from the country, and that by perpetually doubling stakes he gained fifteen or sixteen hundred thousand francs. This poor officer had not, perhaps, a hundred louis per annum, and, in a state of desperation, talked of blowing out his brains. "Sir," said the Marquis de Chabrillant to

him, "lend me from the sum you owe me a crown-piece to pay my coach-hire home, and I will forgive you all the rest." It might be thought that such situations would disgust gamblers, but no—they play more than ever; and at the moment I am writing to you, two illustrious Princes of the reigning family give to this detestable passion the pernicious authority of their example.

At this period was publicly announced the marriage of Mademoiselle Mazarelli with the Marquis de Saint-Chamond. Mademoiselle Mazarelli, the daughter of an actor, had the reputation of a person of wit. She had composed several works that were highly spoken of, and in which slander pretended to recognise the pen of M. Moncrif. A criminal process had been instituted against her by M. L'homme, who, having attempted violence, had been wounded by her with a knife. This judicial affair, from which the heroine extricated herself with good success, gave her a sort of celebrity. Illustrious admirers flocked around her; she could choose; and, having tried several amongst them, decided on the Marquis de Saint-Chamond, who, by marrying her, gave her an honourable station.

Her elevation caused a great deal of stir amongst the ladies of her class. On this occasion the elder Mademoiselle Verrière came to see me. After having spoken to me of Mademoiselle Mazarelli's marriage, "And you too," she said, "are very lucky, for at length you are married to a gentleman. I should like to know how you contrive so to turn the heads of people of quality as to make them marry you." I endeavoured to inform her, without laughing, that good fortune had effected all for me. "Yes," continued Mademoiselle Verrière, "the greatest pleasure I can imagine after that of naming a lover, is to have one's self declared a wife in the face of the Holy Church."

"Why, then, do you not gratify yourself?"

"Ah! if it only depended on me! But dupes are rare. Forgive the expression, my dear Countess; do not be angry about your husband."

"Oh! I am too happy, my dear, to be angry. It is certain

that Mademoiselle Mazarelli is a married woman, that she has a livery, and arms on her carriage, and I would do the same thing if fortune smiled upon me."

These words produced an ugly grimace from Mademoiselle Verrière, who left me full of spite and went about everywhere complaining of my haughtiness.

I related the conversation to Comte Jean, who said to me with much stiffness, "Sister, the acquaintance of such creatures does not beseem a woman of your rank."

As he saw that Molé viewed me with interest, he said with much energy, "What are you thinking about? Is this the moment for such childish nonsense? Why do you allow this player to pay you any attentions? It is not right that he should be seen in your train. If you were a woman of quality, all well and good; but you are not so yet, and yet you give yourself the airs of one. Wait and be a great lady before you take up with an actor." I wished to deny it, but he cut me short with a dozen familiar oaths, and ended by saying, "I have never been jealous on my own account; I am so for my brother—and more than him. Do you understand me? I will not have Molé here again."

At this moment, conducted by his bad star, Molé was announced. Comte Jean turned towards him as he entered, and said, "M. Molé, I have much pleasure in seeing you on the stage, but very little here; I beg you will never again set foot in my house unless you would wish to quit it by the window."

This brutal speech, pronounced in a tone not less so, confounded the actor, who turned pale, then red, endeavoured to give the matter now a serious, and then a joking tone. But Molé has only spirit in his acting; and, however brave, he must be very cautious how he evinces it out of character, for fear of being taken at his word. It was impossible that he could extricate himself honourably, and I pitied him. Comte Jean renewed his command, and even added such intentions of instant compulsion that Molé forgot to take leave of me as he went away. A coward cannot long please

a woman, and my whim ceased from that day. Comte Jean, flinging himself on an ottoman, laughed vociferously. "Ah, the poltroon!" said he; "he did not see the hare under the lion's skin." Thus was my brother-in-law the first to ridicule his own courage, although he was not deficient on proper occasion. I profited by his mirth to reprove his rudeness. "*Ma foi!*" he replied, "I was in the mood to have had a scene, and I could not get it up. Really, though, I was wrong. A gentleman should never deliberately insult a man with whom prejudice forbids his fighting. But I will put matters on an equality between us; I have a great mind, in expiation of the insult, to send him a challenge."

"Wait awhile," said I, "and let him send to you, if he dare."

I thought Molé would think no more of me; but the next day I had a note from him, in which, recurring to the scene of the evening before, he abused Comte Jean, but not in a strain that caused any alarm for his life. He asked me to meet him away from the house, and invited me to deceive the jealous tyrant—the brutal despot! I read this doleful epistle, and cast it into the fire. I did not reply; Molé had none of my writing; I should have been wretched if he had. He despatched a second billet; I was still silent. At the third, in which he threatened me with his vengeance, I was justly indignant. I sent him, by a porter, as from myself, a cane with a gold head, a sort of emblematical response in the manner of certain persons of antiquity. This was cutting, and I was speedily sorry at allowing a feeling of offence which I should have checked. For that reason, in after days, anxious to repair my former offence, I heaped kindness on Molé, and showed myself as generous towards him as I had been otherwise in the affair I have just alluded to.

I tell you an anecdote unknown till now, except to the Maréchale de Mirepoix and the Chancellor Maupeou. Comte Jean attached much importance to my not compromising myself with persons whose indiscretion might have been injurious to me. On his part he did not breathe a syllable

he tormented first Henriette, and then the female hair-dresser, for I had not yet followed the mode, which began to be very general, of having my hair dressed by a man. Comte Jean passed alternately from my dressing-room to the kitchen. He knew Lebel was a gallant and a gourmand, and he was anxious to please him in all senses at once.

At one o'clock I was under arms and prepared to receive him on whom my destiny depended. As soon as I reached the drawing-room Comte Jean compelled me to submit to the test of a rigid examination. His serious air amused me much, as he gazed at me some time in solemn silence. At length his forehead relaxed, a smile of satisfaction played on his lips, and, extending his arms to me, without venturing to touch me, "You are charming—divine!" he said; "Lebel ought to go and hang himself if he does not fall down at your knees."

Soon afterwards the folding doors were hastily opened, and a servant announced M. Lebel, *premier de sa Majesté*, with M. Morand. The Count went to meet the arrivals, and, as I saw Lebel for the first time, he presented him to me in form.

"Sister, this is M. Lebel, *premier de sa Majesté*, who has done us the honour to come and dine with us."

"And he confers a real pleasure on us," said I, looking smilingly on M. Lebel. My look had its effect, for Lebel remained mute and motionless from admiration at my person. At length he stammered out a few incoherent words, which I imagined to be compliments. The Count watched Lebel anxiously, and Morand began to rub his hands, saying:

"Well, sir, what think you of our celestial beauty?"

"She is worthy of a throne," replied Lebel, bending his head before me, and taking my hand, which he pressed respectfully to his lips. The reply was, perhaps, inadvertently made, but I took it as a good augury. "Yes," added Lebel, "you are the most lovely creature I ever met, though no one is more in the habit of seeing handsome females than myself."

"And of causing them to be seen by others," replied Comte Jean.

This was an opening which was not followed up by Lebel. His first enthusiasm having passed, he measured me from head to foot, as if he would take an accurate description of my person.

For my part I began to support the looks of Lebel with more assurance. He was a man of no particular "mark or likelihood," but had made his way. The custom of living at Versailles had given him a certain air of easy impertinence; but you could not discover anything distinguishing in his manners—nothing which concealed his primitive extraction. The direction of the Parc-aux-Cerfs gave him much influence with the King, who found the convenience of such a man, who was willing to take upon himself all the disagreeable part of his clandestine amours. His duties placed him in contact with the Ministers, the Lieutenant of Police and the Comptroller-General. The highest nobility sought his friendship with avidity. They all had a wife, a sister, or daughter whom they wished to make the favourite sultana; and for this it was necessary to get the ear of Lebel. Thus, under a libertine Prince, the destinies of France were at the mercy of a *valet de chambre*. I should tell you, however, that I never had occasion but to speak well of him, and that I have the utmost gratitude for all he did for me. The attachment he testified on our first meeting has never been altered. He gave me his protection as far as it was necessary for me, and when the favour of the King had accorded to me a station whence all the Court sought to hurl me, Lebel seconded me with all his power in my efforts to preserve it. I will say that it is to his vigilance that I owe the overthrow of more than one conspiracy against me. He was a warm and sincere friend, and not at all interested in the services he rendered. He did a great deal of good as well as harm in private. I know poor families whom he has assisted with his own purse when he could obtain nothing for them from the King, who was only prodigal in his pleasures.

However, we dined, and Lebel incessantly praised me to the very skies, and that with so much warmth that I was fearful at one time he would fall in love with me himself and would not resign me to another. Thank heaven, Lebel was a faithful servant.

After dinner, when we left the table, Lebel paid me some compliments; then, pulling out his watch, spoke of an appointment at the Marais, and left without saying a word of seeing us again.

At this abrupt departure Comte Jean and I looked at each other with astonishment. As for Morand, he was overjoyed.

"Well, Countess," said he, "behold the number of your slaves increased by an illustrious adorer. You have made a conquest of M. Lebel, and I am certain he has gone away deeply smitten."

"I hope we shall see him again," said Comte Jean.

"Do you doubt it?"

"Assure him," said I, "of the pleasure it will afford us to receive him as he merits."

Several persons entered, and M. Morand, profiting by the bustle which their entrance occasioned, approached me and said in a low tone:

"You are in possession of his heart; will you charge me with any message to him?"

"M. Morand," was my reply, "what are you thinking of? A woman of my rank throw herself at any person's head?"

"No, certainly not; but you can send him a kind word, or some affectionate token."

"I could not think of it. M. Lebel appeared to me a most agreeable man, and I shall be at all times delighted to see him."

Morand asked nothing more than this, and there our conversation ended.

Two days elapsed without being marked by any event. Comte Jean had spent them with much anxiety. He was absent when, on the third morning, Henriette came hastily into my room. "Madam," she said, "M. the first *valet de*

chambre of the King is in the drawing-room, and enquires if you will receive him." At this news I was surprised and vexed. M. Lebel took me unawares; my toilette was not begun. I gave a hasty glance at my mirror—" Let M. Lebel come in." And M. Lebel, who was on the heels of my maid, entered instantly. After having saluted me, he said, "It is only you, madam, whom one might thus surprise. Your beauty needs no ornament; your charms are decoration sufficient."

I replied to this compliment with (of course) much modesty, according to custom. We entered into conversation, and I found that Lebel really thought me the sister-in-law of Comte Jean; and I remarked the involuntary respect that attended even his familiarity. I left him in his error, which was material to my interests. He talked to me some time of my attractions, of the part which a female like myself might assume in France. Fearing to compromise myself, I made no reply, but maintained the reserve which my character imposed upon me. I am not clever, my friend; I never could conduct an intrigue. I feared to speak or do wrong; and, whilst I kept a tranquil appearance, I was internally agitated at the absence of Comte Jean.

Fortune sent him to me. He was crossing the street when he saw at our door a carriage with the Royal livery. Lebel always used it when his affairs did not demand a positive *incognito*. This equipage made him suspect a visit from Lebel, and he came in opportunely to extricate me from my embarrassment.

"Sir," said Lebel to him when he entered, "here is the lady whose extreme modesty refuses to listen to what I dare not thus explain to her."

"Is it anything I may hear for her," said the Comte, with a smiling air.

"Yes; I am the ambassador of a mighty power; you are the minister plenipotentiary of the lady, and, with your leave, we will go into your private room to discuss the articles of the secret treaty which I have been charged to propose to you. What says madam?"

"I consent to anything that may come from such an ambassador."

Comte Jean instantly led him into another room, and when they were alone, Lebel said to him, "Do you know that your sister-in-law is a most fascinating creature? She has occupied my thoughts since I have known her, and in my enthusiasm I could not help speaking of her in a certain quarter. So highly have I eulogised her that His Majesty desires an interview with her, that he may judge with his own eyes if I am an appreciator of beauty."

At these words Comte Jean felt a momentary agitation, but soon recovering himself, he replied:

"I am exceedingly obliged to you, sir, for the favourable disposition you have evinced towards the Comtesse du Barri. She and I have as much respect as love for His Majesty; but my sister-in-law has not been presented, and, consequently, I can scarcely see how she can be allowed to pay her respects to His Majesty."

"Do not let that disturb you; it is not intended that she shall go and partake of the magnificence of Versailles, but be admitted to an intimacy much more flattering. Would you refuse to grant him that pleasure?"

"It would be a crime of *lèse-majesté*," said the Comte Jean, laughing, "and my family have too much respect for their monarch. We should not be content with a fugitive favour."

"You may expect everything from the charms of the Countess. I am certain they will have the utmost success; but for me, I can give you no guarantee. You must run the chance."

"Your protection, however, is the only thing which encourages my sister-in-law in this affair. But, tell me, when is this meeting to take place?"

"Instantly. The King is impatient to see the Countess, and I have promised that she will sup with him to-morrow evening in my apartment at Versailles."

"How is she to be introduced to the King?"

"I am to entertain four of my friends."

"Who are they?"

"First, the Baron de Gonesse."

"Who is he?"

"The King himself."

"Well, who next?"

"The Duc de Richelieu."

"Who else?"

"The Marquis de Chauvelin."

"Well?"

"The Duc de la Vauguyon."

"What, the devotee?"

"The hypocrite. But never mind; the main point is that you must not appear to recognise the King. Instruct your sister-in-law to this effect."

"Certainly; if she must sin, she had better do so with some reason."

Whilst these gentlemen were thus disposing of me what was I doing? Alone in my room I waited the result of their conference with mortal impatience. The character I had to play was a superb one, and at the moment I was about to enter on the stage I felt all the difficulties of my part. I feared I should not succeed, but fail amidst the insulting hisses of the Versailles party. My fears at once disappeared, and then I pictured myself sitting on a throne, magnificently attired; my imagination wandered in all the enchantments of greatness; then, as if from remorse, I recalled my past life. The former lover of Nicolas blushed before the future mistress of Louis XV. A thousand different reflections crowded upon me and mingled in my brain. If to live is to think, I lived a whole age in one quarter of an hour. At length I heard some doors open, a carriage rolled away, and Comte Jean entered my chamber.

"Victory!" cried he, embracing me with transport. "Victory! my dear Jeannette. To-morrow you sup with the King!" On this information I turned pale, my strength forsook me, and I was compelled to sit down, or rather to fall into a chair; for, according to Jean Jacques Rousseau, my legs shook under me (*flageolaient*). This, however, was the only movement of weakness which I betrayed. When

I recovered a little, the Comte Jean told me the conversation he had had with Lebel. I joked about the title of Baron de Gonesse, and I promised to treat the King as if ignorant of his *incognito*. One thing only made me uneasy, and that was supping with the Duc de Richelieu, who had seen me before at Madame de Lagarde's; but the idea that he would not remember me gave me renewed courage.

On so important an occasion Comte Jean did not forget to repeat his instructions over again. These are nearly his words, for I think I learnt them by heart:

"Remember that it is on your first interview that your success depends. Let him learn, through you, those utter tendernesses which have heretofore been sought for him in vain. He is like the monarch of old who was willing to pay the half of his crown for an unknown pleasure. Lebel is wearied in seeking every week for new fruit. He is quite disposed to serve you, and will second you in the best manner. You are about to become the centre of attraction to all courtiers and noble *courtisanes*. You must expect that they will endeavour to cry you down, because you will have carried off from them a gem to which every family has its pretensions. You must at first stand firmly before the storm; but afterwards you will find enlisting themselves under your banner all those who have neither wife, sister, nor daughter—that is, all who have no mistress to offer to the King. You must attach these to you by place and favour; they must be first thought of, and then you must think of yourself and me, my dear girl."

"All this is well enough," I replied; "but as yet I am nothing."

"*Morbleu!* to-morrow you will be everything," cried Comte Jean, with his determined energy; "but we must think about this morrow. Make haste, noble Countess. Go to all the milliners—seek what is elegant rather than what is rich. Be as lovely, pleasing and gay as possible; this is the main point—and God will do all the rest."

He pronounced this blasphemy in a laughing tone, and I confess I could not help joining in the laugh, and then hastened to comply with his instructions.

CHAPTER IX

A slight preface—Arrival at Versailles—*La toilette*—Portrait of the King—The Duc de Richelieu—The Marquis de Chauvelin—The Duc de la Vauguyon—Supper with the King—The first night—The following day—The curiosity of Comte Jean—Presents from the King—How disposed of.

The chances against our succeeding in our enterprise were at least a thousand to one. The sea upon which, trusting to the favourable influence of my leading star, we were about to venture was filled with rocks and shoals which threatened the poor mariner who should direct his barque near them. In the first place, I had to dread my obscure birth, as well as the manner in which my life had been passed; and still more had I to fear the indifferent reputation of Comte Jean. There was more than sufficient in all this to disturb a head far stronger than I could boast. However, thanks to my natural thoughtlessness, no troublesome thoughts interfered to break my rest on the night preceding a day so important to me, and I slept as tranquilly as though upon waking I had no other occupation for my time than a walk on the boulevards, or a drive to the Bois de Boulogne.

Comte Jean, however, had passed a very different night; for once, the whisperings of ambition had overcome even his natural indifference and carelessness, and, tired of tossing upon a sleepless pillow, he arose at the first break of day, reproached me for slumbering so long, and allowed me neither peace nor rest till I joined him dressed for our journey. At length we set out. According to our agreement with Lebel, I was closely muffled up in my large *calèche*. The carriage rolled along till we reached Versailles, where we had for the last month

engaged a lodging, which might be useful to us at all events. We alighted and, after vainly seeking a few moments' repose, proceeded on foot to find Lebel, in whose apartments we were to attire ourselves in a suitable manner.

"You are welcome," said the Count. "Pray consider yourself at home."

"I accept your augury," replied I. "It would be amusing enough to find that my young prophet had predicted rightly."

"Well, then," said my conductor, laughing, "I recommend you to manage a slight slip on the staircase; it would be taking possession after the manner of the ancients."

"No, no, I thank you," answered I; "no falls, if you please; they are not propitious in France."

Whilst we were thus speaking we were crossing a long suite of chambers, and reached the one at which we were expected. We knocked cautiously at a door, which was opened to us with equal caution. Scarcely had we entered than Lebel eagerly came forward to receive us.

"Ah! madam," cried he, "I began to fear you might not come. You have been looked for with an impatience——"

"Which can hardly equal mine," interrupted I; "for you were prepared for your visitor, whilst I have yet to learn who is the friend that so kindly desires to see me."

"It is better it should be so," added Lebel. "Do not seek either to guess or discover more than that you will here meet with some cheerful society—friends of mine—who will sup at my house, but with whom circumstances prevent my sitting down at table."

"How!" said I, with affected surprise. "Not sup with us?"

"Even so," replied Lebel; and then added, with a laugh, "*He* and I sit down to supper together! What an idea! No! you will find that just as the guests are about to sit down at table I shall suddenly be called out of the room, and shall only return at the close of the repast."

All this was but of small import to me. Nevertheless, I affected to regret the unavoidable absence of Lebel; in fact, I believe that the first breath inspired at Court is

fraught with falsehood and deceit, entirely destructive to every feeling of natural candour.

Lebel, with the most ceremonious gallantry, conducted me to a private dressing-room, where I found several females waiting to assist me at my toilette. I abandoned myself to their cares, which were, indeed, most skilfully exercised in my behalf. They wrought wonders in my appearance, bathing me after the Eastern fashion, adorning my hair and person till I issued from their hands blooming and beauteous as a houri.

When I returned to the room in which Lebel was expecting me, his surprise was almost overpowering.

"You are indeed," exclaimed he, "the new sun which is to rise upon Versailles."

"Excellent!" cried I, laughing extravagantly; "but like the planet you are pleased to compare me with, I must reserve my splendid rising till I have obtained fresh powers from the aid of night." [1]

The Count entered, and joined in his congratulations on the beauty of my appearance. All at once the hasty sound of a bell, violently pulled, was heard.

"The object of your attack approaches," said Lebel to me; "it would be as well to reconnoitre a little. Remember, not a word of his rank; no downcast, timid looks at his sovereign power; no bending of knees or faltering of voice."

The advice thus given was useless. Comte Jean, who bore the reputation of at least a man of much cool impudence, was, I am certain, more deficient than myself in courage upon the occasion, and, I verily believe, asked himself several times whether he durst appear before his Prince with one whom he was falsely asserting to be his sister-in-law. However these thoughts might or might not have disturbed him, we proceeded onwards till we reached the apartment where our invited friends were expecting us; and here I will, with the reader's permission, digress awhile, in

1 "*Mais avant de me lever il faut que je me couche*" is the witty reply in the original, but which it is impossible to render fully and piquantly through the dilution of a translation.—TRANS.

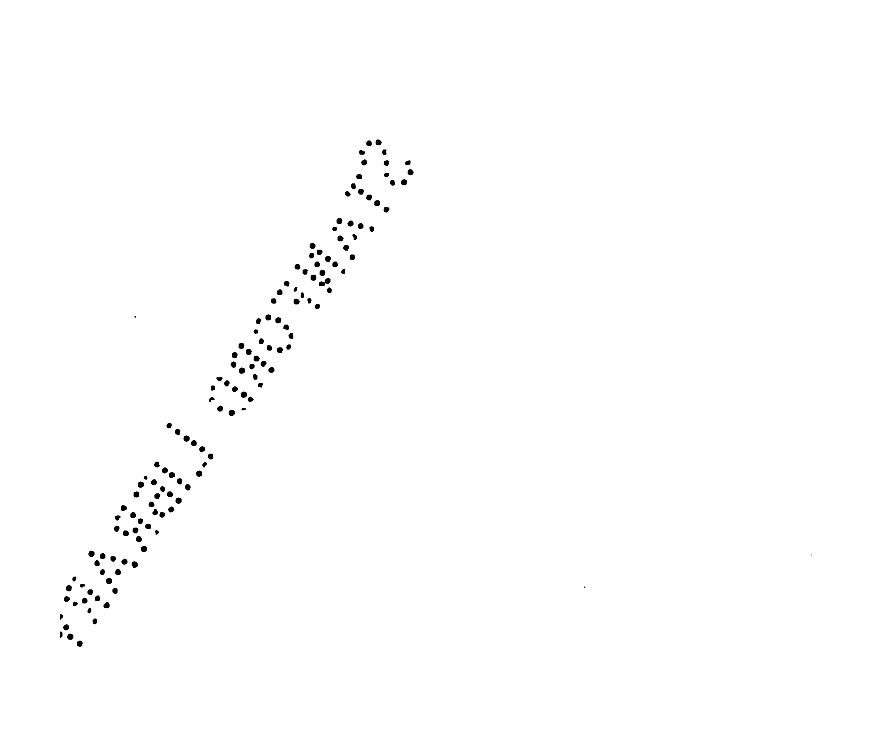
order to say a few introductory words respecting the four personages with whom I had the honour of supping.

And first, Louis XV., King of France (or, as he was upon the present occasion styled, the Baron de Gonesse), was one of those sentimental egotists who believed he loved the whole world, his subjects and his family; whilst in reality the sole engrossing object was *self*. Gifted with many personal and intellectual endowments, which might have disputed the palm with the most lively and engaging personages of the Court, he was yet devoured by *ennui*, and of this he was well aware; but his mind was made up to meet this *ennui* as one of the necessary accompaniments of Royalty. Devoid of taste in literary matters, he despised all connected with the *belles lettres*, and esteemed men only in proportion to the number and richness of their armorial bearings. With him M. de Voltaire ranked beneath the lowest country squire, and the very mention of a man of letters was terrifying to his imagination from its disturbing the current of his own ideas. He revelled in the plenitude of power, yet felt dissatisfied with the mere title of King. He ardently desired to signalise himself as the first General of the age, and, prevented from obtaining this (in his opinion) highest of honours, entertained the utmost jealousy of Frederick II., and spoke with undisguised spleen and ill-humour of the exploits of his brother of Prussia. The habit of commanding, and the prompt obedience he had ever met with, had palled upon his mind, and impressed him with feelings of indifference for all things which thus appeared so easily obtained; and this satiety and consequent listlessness was by many attributed to a melancholic disposition. He disliked any appearance of opposition to his will; not that he particularly resented the opposition itself, but he knew his own weakness, and feared lest he should be compelled to make a show of a firmness he was conscious of not possessing. For the clergy he entertained the most superstitious veneration; and he feared God because he had a still greater awe and dread of the devil. In the hands of his confessor he confidently believed was lodged absolute



Louis XV.

From Painting by Maurice de Latour, in the Louvre



power to confer on him unlimited license to commit any or every sin. He greatly dreaded pamphlets, satires, epigrams and the opinion of posterity, and yet his conduct was that of a man who scoffs at the world's judgment. This hasty sketch may with safety be taken as the portrait of Louis XV., although much might be added; yet for the present I will confine myself to the outline of my picture, which I shall have frequent occasion to retouch in the course of my journal. It is my intention to present him in all possible lights before the reader, and I flatter myself I shall produce a perfect resemblance of the man I seek to depict. Let us now proceed to consider the Duc de Richelieu.

This nobleman, when in his seventy-second year, had preserved, even in so advanced an age, all his former pretensions to notice. His success in so many love affairs—a success which he never could have merited—had rendered him celebrated. He was now a superannuated coxcomb, a wearisome and clumsy butterfly. When, however, he could be brought to exercise his sense, by remembering that he was no longer young, he became fascinating beyond idea, from the finished ease and grace of his manner and the polished and piquant style of his discourse. Still, I speak of him as a mere man of outward show, for the Duke's attainments were certainly superficial, and he possessed more of the jargon of a man of letters than the sound reality. Amongst other proofs of consummate ignorance, he was deficient even in orthography, and was fool enough to boast of so disgraceful a fact, as though it conferred honour on him; perhaps, indeed, he found that the easiest way of getting over the business. He possessed a most ignoble turn of mind; all feelings of an elevated nature were wanting within him. A bad son, an unkind husband and a worse father, he could scarcely be expected to become a steady friend. All whom he feared he hesitated not to trample under foot; and his favourite maxim, which he has a hundred times repeated to me, was, "That we should never hesitate to set our foot upon the necks of all those who might in any way interfere with our projects. Dead men" (he would further

add) "tell no tales!" There was one person, nevertheless, whom he detested and flattered at the same time, and this was Voltaire, who well repaid him in like coin. He called the Duc de Richelieu the tyrant of the tennis-court[1] (*tripot*), and the Duke returned the compliment by invariably designating him "scoundrel" and "poetaster"; the only difference was that the Duc de Richelieu only treated the poet thus in *sotto voce*, whilst M. de Voltaire sought not to conceal, either in his writings or conversation, his candid opinion of the illustrious Duke and Peer; and he might justly accuse the Duke of ingratitude, for he, no doubt, owed a considerable portion of the reputation he enjoyed as a General to the brilliant verses in which Voltaire had celebrated his exploits.

The Marquis de Chauvelin was equally skilful as a warrior and diplomatist. Gentle, graceful and witty, he joined to the most extreme versatility of talent the utmost simplicity of character. Once known, he could not fail of being valued and esteemed, and the King entertained the most lively regard for him. The noble-minded Marquis was far from taking advantage of his Sovereign's favour—far from it; he neither boasted of it nor presumed upon it. This truly wonderful man died, unhappily, too soon for me, for the King, to whom he gave the wisest counsel, and for foreign Courts, who knew and appreciated his worth. I shall have occasion to speak of him hereafter. He had a brother, a wicked little hump-backed creature, brave as Cæsar, and a bitter enemy to the Jesuits, whom he did not a little contribute to overturn in the Parliament of Paris, to which he belonged. The King detested this man as much as he loved and cherished the brother, and that is not saying a little.

The fourth guest was the Duc de la Vauguyon, the really *perpetual* tutor to the Princes of France, for he had educated four successively. He had displayed in the army both bravery and talent, but he was a confirmed Jesuit, and conducted himself towards me upon the strictest principles of his

---

1 La Comédie Française.

order. He will appear again in the drama, but for the present I must put him aside, whilst I return to my *entrée* to the saloon, which was about to take place.

Immediately after Lebel had conducted me into it, he was called away, and quitted us. The King rose and approached me, saluting me with the most admirable gallantry, and addressing to me the most encouraging and gratifying words. His gentle yet polished manners, his fine countenance, noble air, and the free and unrestrained glances of admiration which sparkled in his eyes, communicated to me a feeling of support and confidence which effectually reassured me and roused me from the involuntary emotion I had felt at the moment when I first appeared in his presence. The King addressed a few words to Comte Jean, and then regarded him steadily, as though he were trying to recall his features; but his eye quickly turned on me again, upon whom he bestowed the most intoxicating attention. Never was first sight more effective, and never did a flame so rapidly increase as did the passion of my noble adorer. Ere we had seated ourselves at the supper-table he was ages gone in love.

It would have provoked a smile from any countenance to perceive how the respect and admiration with which the three courtiers regarded me increased in proportion as the sentiments of the King towards me betrayed themselves more and more. At first I had been considered as a person of little or no importance. Soon, however, as their sagacious eyes discovered the state of their master's mind, the air of familiarity with which they had regarded me gave place to a more studied politeness, which, in its turn, as matters progressed, was superseded by the most delicate attention; and ere we rose from table these gentlemen watched my looks with the most eager anxiety to obtain the honour of my notice and hopes of future patronage from one whom they easily foresaw would be fully qualified to bestow it. Comte Jean observed all that was passing in profound silence. As for me, I talked and laughed with perfect freedom from all restraint, and my frank, unaffected mirth appeared to enchant the King. I knew that he was weary of the nice formalities of courtly

beauty, and desired to refresh his eyes and ears with something less refined, and I gratified him to his heart's wish. The conversation became lively and animated, the merits of men of letters were discussed, the French and Italian theatre passed in review before us, and finally, we amused ourselves with anecdotes relative to the intrigues of Court. The Baron de Gonesse related to us a circumstance which had just been communicated to him by a county magistrate. I must here apprise the reader that these administrators of justice were directed to collect all the facts—scandalous, horrible, ridiculous, or piquant—which occurred within their jurisdiction, in order that, being forwarded to the King, they might aid in distracting his mind from the heavy cares of government. Alas! how many strange and eventful things have I since learned by similar channels.

The supper terminated, the King's friends remained some time conversing with us. Whilst these noblemen were busily celebrating my praises in words sufficiently loud to reach the King's ear, the Baron de Gonesse, standing by my side, was prosecuting his suit in the most ardent terms. I received his overtures with becoming grace and modesty. As I have before said, the exterior of the King was very prepossessing, and what he wanted in youth he made up for by all the mature graces of dignified Royalty. At last Lebel appeared, and made me a sign to rise from my seat. Up to this period nothing had arisen to betray the *incognito* of the august monarch, and in order to keep up my pretended ignorance of his grandeur I quitted the apartment with little ceremony. Lebel conducted me to an adjoining chamber furnished with the utmost magnificence. When we were seated he turned to the Comte Jean, who had followed us, and said, "It rests with yourself whether you will return to Paris or remain at Versailles. But as for miladi, who seems much fatigued, she will, we trust, honour us by accepting a bed at the castle."

My self-created brother-in-law understood as well as I did the signification of these words, and clearly read in their import how far I had attracted the favour of the King. In order to have rendered the impression more lasting, we could have

wished that matters had been less precipitated, but we were under a roof where everything yielded to the caprices of its master, and resignation to his will became a matter of course.

And here I trust I may be pardoned if I pass over certain details which could not, at this lapse of time, interest or amuse anyone; besides, although I have found no difficulty in reciting former events of my life, I find my pen more prudish and coy than were my ears or mouth. All I shall say is that the following day, as soon as I was left alone in my chamber, Lebel entered, and, prostrating himself at the side of my bed, said:

"Madame la Comtesse is Queen and mistress here. Not only has your noble lover failed to communicate to me the usual signal of disgust or dislike, but he has spoken of you to me in the most favourable light, declaring that for the first time in his life he felt the influence of a true and sincere affection; for this reason he desired I would not convey to you the contents of this casket, as originally intended."

"And what does it contain?" I asked, with childish eagerness.

"Oh, a trifle unworthy of her who is now the mistress of his warmest love—only a purse containing a hundred louis, and a suit of emeralds worth a similar sum. He bade me say it might have served to recompense a mere fleeting fancy, but that it is unworthy of your charms, nor can he insult you by the offer of it."

"Will he, then, see me again?" I enquired.

"To-morrow evening, if agreeable to you."

"Only say that his wishes are mine."

"Would you wish to see the Comte Jean before you rise? He has been waiting with the utmost impatience to see you since seven o'clock this morning."

"Let him come in."

The Count entered, and I saw by the triumphant joy painted on his face that Lebel had told him of the propitious state of things. He ran up to me with outstretched arms, congratulating me upon my success, and putting at the same time several questions, to which, either from mere womanly

caprice, or presuming upon my recent elevation to the character of prime favourite, I refused to reply.

My folly drew down upon me his severe anger, and several oaths escaped his lips, which, echoed back by walls so unused to similar violence, struck Lebel with terror. That faithful ally placed his hand over his mouth, imploring him to recollect himself and the place he was in. As for me, dreading some foolish burst of his impetuosity, I tried some of my sweetest smiles, and, inviting him to sit beside me, related to him and Lebel those particulars which my pen refuses to retrace. Amongst other things, I told them I had remarked to the King that I had known perfectly well who he was all the preceding evening when supping with him, and that he had the simplicity to say "he was surprised I had not appeared more embarrassed in his presence."

Our conversation terminated, I wished to return to Paris, and I was, without further hindrance, allowed to depart. I had arrived there scarcely an hour when I received from His Majesty a magnificent diamond agrafe, worth at least 60,000 francs, and bank notes to the amount of 200,000 livres.

Comte Jean and myself were well-nigh struck dumb with astonishment at the sight of such treasures; to us, who had never in our lives possessed such sums, they appeared inexhaustible. My brother-in-law divided them into two equal portions, one of which he put into his pocket and the other into my escritoire. With this arrangement I did not interfere; nothing seemed to me more simple than that he should satisfy his need out of my superfluity. I bestowed 2,000 crowns upon Henriette, and expended in the course of the day at least a quarter of my riches in trifles as unnecessary as useless; and all this without once remembering that as I owed my present abundance to a momentary inclination on the part of the King, so the turn of an hour, or a fresh fancy on the part of my munificent adorer, might reduce me to the unprovided state in which I had so lately been. That evening was passed *tête-à-tête* with Comte Jean. He thought, as I

did, that the foundation of our treasure was as firm as a rock, and he gave me many counsels for the future, which I promised to observe—for indeed it was to my own interest to do so. Upon how many follies did we then debate, which but a few days afterwards we found practicable. The different ministers passed in review before us; some we determined upon retaining, whilst others were dismissed; and already I began in idea to act with sovereign power over these illustrious personages, amongst whom I anticipated shortly playing so important a part. "After all," said I, "the world is but an amusing theatre, and I see no reason why a pretty woman should not play a principal part in it."

CHAPTER X

The King's message—Letter from the Countess—A second supper at Versailles—The Duc d'Ayen—A short account of M. de Fleury—The Duc de Duras—Conversation with the King—The next day—A visit from the Duc de Richelieu—Visit from the Duc de la Vauguyon—Visit from Comte Jean—Visit from the King—A third supper—Favour.

EARLY the following day I received a message from the King, accompanied with a bouquet of flowers tied round with a string of diamonds. A short letter was annexed to this splendid gift, which I would transcribe here had it not been taken from me with many others. My reply, which I wrote upon the spur of the moment, was concise, and as I preserved the rough copy, under the impression of its being one day useful, I can give the reader the exact words:

"The billet traced by your noble hands renders me the happiest of women. My joy is beyond description. Thanks, M. le Baron, for your charming flowers. Alas! they will be faded and withered by to-morrow; but not so fleeting and short-lived are the sentiments with which you have inspired me. Believe me, the lively desire you express to see me again is entirely mutual; and in the impatience with which you await our next interview I read but my own sentiments. The ardour with which you long to embrace me is fully equalled by the affection which leads me to desire no gratification greater than that of passing my whole life in your society. Adieu, M. le Baron. You have forbidden my addressing you as your rank and my respect would have me; I will therefore content myself with assuring you of the ardent affection of the

COMTESSE DU BARRI."

The signature I adopted was a bold piece of falsehood, but it was too late to recede; besides, I was addressing myself in my letter, not to the King, but to the Baron de Gonesse; for Louis, from I know not what unaccountable caprice, seemed to wish to preserve his *incognito*. I have since learned that Francis I. assumed the same name, although

upon a very different occasion. Replying to a letter from Charles V., in which that Emperor had given himself a long string of high-sounding titles, he contented himself with simply signing his letter, "François, Baron de Gonesse." Louis XV. was very fond of borrowed appellations. Unlike the vanity, so common to mankind, of seeking to set off their pretensions by assumed titles, it is the pleasure of Royalty to descend to a lower grade in society when concealment becomes desirable, either from policy or pleasure; and Louis sought, in the familiarity in which a plain baron might safely indulge, a relief from the *ennui* attendant upon the rigid etiquette of Court life. I had omitted in my letter to the Baron to remind him that we were to meet that very evening, but that did not prevent my repairing to Versailles punctually at the appointed hour. I was conducted into the same apartment as before, where I found the females who had then assisted at my toilet again prepared to lend me their aid; and from this moment I had a regular establishment of attendants appointed for my use.

The moment the King was informed of my arrival, unable to restrain his impatience, he hastened to me to assist at my dressing-table, and he continued standing beside me so long as the operation lasted. I felt greatly embarrassed, not knowing whether I durst take the liberty of requesting him to be seated. However, my silence on the subject was greatly admired, and ascribed to my perfect acquaintance with polished life, when in reality it originated from mere timidity. My triumph was complete; the monarch smiled at and admired every word as it fell from my lips, kissed my hands, and played with the curls of my long hair, sportively twisting his fingers amidst my flowing ringlets with all the vivacity of a lover of twenty. The company upon this evening was different from that of the former occasion, consisting of the Duc de Duras, first gentleman of the bedchamber, and the Duc d'Ayen, who had the reputation of being a great wit. However, in my opinion, he was much more deserving the character of a

real fiend; his very breath was poisonous, and his touch venomous as the bite of an adder. I well remember what M. de Fleury said of him to the King in my presence. "Sire," said he, "the thing I most dread in the world next to a bite from M. d'Ayen is the bite of a mad dog." For my own part, I did not in the end look upon him with less terror, and well he paid me for my fears. Upon one occasion the King, when speaking of me to him, said, "I am well aware that I succeed Sainte-Foix."

"Yes, Sire," replied the Duke, "in the same manner as Your Majesty succeeds Pharamond!"

I never forgave him those words, dictated by a fiendish malice. However, upon the evening of my first introduction to him he behaved to me with the most marked politeness. I was then an object of no consequence to his interests, and his vision had not yet revealed to him the height I was destined to attain. He looked upon me but as one of those meteors which sparkled and shone in the castle at Versailles for twenty-four hours and sank to rise no more.

The Duc de Duras was not an ill-disposed person, but inconceivably stupid; indeed, wit was by no means a family inheritance. Both father and son, good sort of people in other respects, were for ever saying or doing some good thing in support of their reputation for stupidity at Court., One day the King, quite jokingly, enquired of the Duc de Duras what was done with the old moons. "Upon my word, Sire," replied he, "I can give you no idea, never having seen; but with Your Majesty's permission I will endeavour to learn from M. de Cassini!" To such a pitch did the poor man's simplicity extend. Both father and son were nominated to attend the King of Denmark when on his road to visit France. The King observed to a person, who repeated it to me, "The French are generally styled a clever, witty nation; I cannot say I should ever have been able to discover it had I been tempted to form my opinion from the specimen they have sent me."

As far as I am concerned, after saying so many unfavourable things of the MM. de Duras, I must do them the justice

to say that their conduct towards me was everything that could be desired. I was always glad to see them; it gave my own imagination a sort of sedative to converse with these two simple-minded beings, whose interests I was always ready to promote by every means in my power, and I trust the memory of what I have done will be long remembered by the noble house of Duras.

This supper did not pass off so gaily as the former one. The Duc de Duras spoke as little as possible, in the dread of making some unlucky speech, and the Duc d'Ayen sat devouring the spleen he could not give vent to and meditating fresh objects upon whom to exercise his malignity. He vainly endeavoured to lead me on to make some ridiculous observation, but without success; happily for him the King did not perceive his aim. My Royal lover was indeed so entirely engrossed by me that he lost all the Duke's manœuvres; his transports appeared too much for his senses to sustain, and he vowed that I should never quit him more, but remain to be elevated by his power to the first place at Court. At the monarch's sign the two guests withdrew. When the Duc d'Ayen quitted the room:

"That nobleman is by no means to my taste," said I to the King; "he has the air of a spy who wishes me no good."

"Do you really think so, my lovely Countess?"

"I am certain of it; and I already shudder at the bare anticipation of an enemy having access to Your Majesty's ear."

"Reassure yourself," said the King, with the utmost tenderness; "in me you have a sure defender who will never forsake you; look upon me from this minute as your natural protector, and woe be to him on whose head your displeasure shall fall."

After this conversation the King and myself retired to rest, and when he quitted me in the morning he entreated of me not to return to Paris, but to give him my company for the whole week. Lebel made his appearance to beg I would consider myself as mistress of the apartments I occupied, and that he

had received orders to provide me with an establishment upon the most handsome scale.

That very day Henriette, whom I had sent for and instituted my head waiting-woman, informed me that an old gentleman, attired as though for a grand gala, but who refused to send in his name, begged to be permitted to pay his respects. I bade her admit him. It was the Duc de Richelieu.

"Madame la Comtesse," said he, bowing low, "I come to complain of your want of condescension; unless, indeed, your memory has been in fault. Was it possible that when I had the honour of supping with you the other night you did not recollect your former old friend?"

"If, indeed, my forgetfulness were a fault, M. le Maréchal, it was one in which you bore an equal share. You were not more forward than myself in displaying marks of recognition."

"That arose only from the dazzling increase of your beauty. You were but a nymph when last my eyes beheld you, and now you are matured into a goddess."

The Duke then made some slight allusion to the family of Madame de Lagarde, but, guessing with his admirable tact that such reminiscences could not be particularly agreeable to me, he dexterously turned the conversation by requesting permission to present to me his nephew, the Duc d'Aiguillon, that he might leave a worthy substitute and champion near the King when State affairs called him into Gascony. He craved my kind offices to obtain the intimate acquaintance of Comte Jean. They were subsequently at daggers drawn with each other; but this haughty, overbearing lord conducted himself at first with the most abject servility. The third favour he had to solicit was that I would name him to the King, as frequently as opportunities occurred, to form one of our supper-parties. All this I engaged to do; nor indeed could I refuse after the violent protestations of friendship he made me.

"You will, ere long," said he, "see the whole Court at your feet, but beware of considering them all as your friends. Have a care, above all, of the Duchesse de Grammont. She has long been endeavouring to obtain the King's affections,

and she will see with hatred and fury another more worthy engrossing the place she has so vainly contended for. She and her impertinent brother will call in the aid of the devil himself to dispossess you of your elevated seat; you are lost if you do not twist both their necks."

"What, M. le Maréchal, shall I mark my career by a murder?"

"You take me too literally; I only mean that in your place I would not be at the trouble of keeping any terms with them."

"Ah! M. le Duc, I understand you now; yet it seems a bad augury to have to begin my reign by cabals and intrigues."

"Alas! my fair Countess, you are too good, too guileless for a Court life. Between ourselves, we are all hypocrites, more or less; mistrust everyone, even those who make the finest protestations."

"In that case the first object of my suspicion would be my old and esteemed friend, the Maréchal de Richelieu."

"Ah, madam! this is not fair usage, thus to turn my weapons against myself, and to fight me with my own arms."

Upon this the Duke quitted me, and scarcely had he left the room when the Duc de la Vauguyon entered. This gentleman offered me no advice; he contented himself by styling the Jesuits his "very good friends," and continually turning the conversation upon their merits. I allowed him to express his attachment, without interruption, for these disagreeable men, whom I determined in my own mind to have nothing to do with, recollecting all I had heard of their dislike to our sex. After an hour passed in amusing talk, the Duc de la Vauguyon retired, well pleased with his visit, and his place was immediately supplied by Comte Jean, to whom I communicated all that had passed between my late visitors and myself.

"For heaven's sake," said he, "let us not be the dupes of these great lords; before we range ourselves under the banners of either of them let us secure our own footing; let us wait till you are presented."

"But, my good friend, I must be a married lady to obtain that honour."

"And so you will be shortly; do not be uneasy about that. I have written to my brother Guillaume to set out without delay for Paris. Your swain will be easily induced to marry you. What do you think of that?"

I gave Comte Jean to comprehend by signs that I left my destiny in his hands, and he kissed my hands and withdrew. The King managed to steal a few minutes to converse with me.

"You did not entrust me, my sweet friend," said he, "with the circumstance of your having formerly known the Duc de Richelieu. Less reserved on the subject than you were, he told me he had seen you at the house of Madame de Lagarde, who considered you one of her dearest friends."

"Sire," replied I, "I was too much occupied with Your Majesty to think of any other person in the world."

My answer delighted him; he looked at me in the most gracious manner.

"You would almost persuade me that you love me," said he, smiling.

"Indeed, Your Majesty," I said, "I pray only that you desire the continuance of my affection."

"In that case," replied he, kissing my hand with fervour, "you do but partake of my tenderness for you."

These words flattered my vanity; and here I must declare that if I never felt for the King that violent attachment which is termed love, I ever entertained for him the warmest esteem. He was so attentive, so kind to me, that I must have been a monster of ingratitude could I have looked upon him with indifference.

Our supper on this night was again lively as the first had been. The Duc de Richelieu entertained us with several amusing anecdotes; not that they contained anything very piquant, but the Duke related them well, and we were all in the humour to be pleased, and laughed heartily at what he said. Comte Jean, whose eye constantly followed me, appeared perfectly satisfied with all I said or did. As

for the King, he seemed enchanted with me, and appeared wholly occupied in watching my looks, that he might anticipate my wants. After supper, in the *tête-à-tête* which followed, he explained himself in terms which left me no doubt how securely my empire over him was established Had he been less explicit on the subject, the flattering marks of favour, and the adulatory compliments I received from all on the following day, would well have assured me of it. I was no longer an obscure and friendless individual, but the beloved mistress of the King; I was, to use the expression of Lebel, "a new sun which had arisen to illumine the horizon of Versailles." I could no longer doubt my power when I saw noble personages present themselves to solicit the most servile employments about my person. Amongst others, I might instance a certain Madame de Saint-Benoit, who continued first lady of my chamber during the whole time of my regency—my justly-valued Henriette being content to take the second place of honour.

CHAPTER XI

The Duc d'Aiguillon—The Duc de Fronsac—The Duchesse de Grammont—The meeting—Sharp words on both sides—The Duc de Choiseul—Mesdames d'Aiguillon—Letter from the Duc d'Aiguillon—Reply of Madame du Barri—Mademoiselle Guimard—The Prince de Soubise—Explanation—The Rohans—Madame de Marsan—Court friendships.

THE Duc de Richelieu, who was in haste to go to Guienne, lost no time in presenting to me the Duc d'Aiguillon. He was not young, but handsome and well made, with much amiability and great courage. A sincere friend, no consideration could weaken his regard; an adversary to be dreaded, no obstacle could repress his boldness. His enemies—and amongst them he included the whole magistracy—his enemies, I say, have used him shamefully, but he treated them too ill for one to believe in anything they say of him. If he were ambitious, he had the excuse of superior merit; and if he showed himself too severe in one particular, it proceeded from an energy of mind which did not allow him to have more pity for others than they had for him. Do not, my friend, think that the attachment I had for him can transport me beyond just limits. Since he is in his grave, my illusions, if I had any, have dissipated. I only give to my deceased friends the tribute due to them—truth and tears. But really, without thinking of it, I am needlessly attributing to myself these virtues, forgetting that you are not one of those who would fain render me as black as possible in the eyes of posterity.

In proportion as the first sight of the uncle had prejudiced me against him, so much the more did it propitiate me towards the nephew. I saw in him a generous heart, and a genius capable of lofty actions, which you would vainly

have sought for in the Maréchal de Richelieu. No doubt, at the beginning of our *liaison*, the Duc d'Aiguillon only saw in me a woman who could be useful to his projects and plans; but soon his heart joined the alliance, and a devotion of calculation was succeeded by a vehement passion, of which I was justly proud, as it subdued to my chains the most accomplished of courtiers.

Our first interview was lively. The Maréchal and he supported the conversation with much gaiety. M. de Richelieu, as I have already told you, had neither wit nor information, but possessed that ease of the first circles, those manners of high breeding, those courtly graces, which often surpass wit and information.

"My nephew," said he to the Duke, "madam can do much for us; but we must first do something for her. Without support, without friends, she will be lost at Versailles; let us be her partisans if she will allow it, and let her youth have the benefit of our experience."

The tone in which the Duc d'Aiguillon replied delighted me. He said he was but too happy to serve me, and begged me to rely on him as I would on myself.

"But," he continued, "we have to struggle with a powerful party. The Duchesse de Grammont and her brother are not the persons to give up the field without striking a blow. But, madam, by the assistance of your happy and lovely star, I will enter the lists with pleasure, and if a glance of your eyes will recompense a conqueror, I shall succeed."

"Oh," exclaimed the Duke, "my nephew is a second Amadis in gallantry, and of undaunted courage. You will be satisfied with him, madam, much more than with my son, who only resembles the family in his defects."

The Duc de Fronsac was justly hated by his father; he was what is called a decided scamp, without one redeeming point or virtue. Dissipated without agreeableness, a courtier without address, a soldier without courage, he thoroughly deserved his bad reputation. He was not hated, because hatred implies a species of honour, but he was universally

despised. His father hated him; he hated his father. The reciprocity was edifying. I have often seen the Duc de Fronsac, and always with disgust. He had incurred the extremity of punishment when, trying to carry off a butcher's daughter, he rendered himself guilty of the triple crimes of arson, rape and robbery. This was the most splendid deed of his life—at least, his father said so—the only one in which he had shown ——, guess what; for, my friend, I will not pen the cynical word made use of by his father. It must be confessed that we sometimes kept very bad company at Versailles. The King, who abhorred mean actions, did not like the Duc de Fronsac, but was full of kindly feeling towards the Duc d'Aiguillon. This latter experienced the extent of his favour in his long and obstinate struggle with the Parliament of Bretagne. It must be owned that if he gained the victory at Court, he decidedly lost it in the city, and I was publicly insulted on this account in the most brutal manner. However, the friendship with which his first interview inspired me I have always preserved unaltered.

The week glided away, and each day my fortune seemed more fully assured. The love of the King increased; he heaped presents on me perpetually, and seemed to think he never could do enough for me. The bounties of Louis XV. were known, and instantly aroused against me the two enemies with whom I had been threatened—the Duc de Choiseul and his sister, the Duchesse de Grammont. I must say, however, that, at first, the brother contented himself with despising me; but the Duchess was furious. I had offended her feminine self-love, and she could not forgive me. I have told you that she obtained possession of the King by stratagem. This is a fact. She was in a place of concealment during a regal debauch, and when Louis XV. left the table, with his head heated by wine, she awaited him in his bed to commit a sort of violence on him. What curious ambition! As soon as this noble lady learned my position, she was desirous of knowing who I was, and I have since been told all the measures she took to learn this. She did not confine her search to the circle of Versailles,

but hastened to prosecute her enquiries in Paris with M. de Sartines. The Lieutenant of Police, not suspecting the favour that awaited me, as well as that which I already enjoyed, and, on the other hand, persuaded of that of the Choiseul family, set all his bloodhounds on my track. They did not fail to bring him back a thousand horrible tales about me, with which he gratified the Duchess, who, thinking thereby to do me a severe injury, spread in the Château a multitude of shameful tales against me, hoping that they would reach the ears of the King and disgust him with his amour. It was at this juncture that there appeared in the *Nouvelles à la Main* those infamous articles now found in what they call the Collection of Bachaumont. From the same source proceeded the songs *à la Bourbonnaise*,[1] which filled Paris and were sung everywhere. These scandals produced no other effect than to increase the attachment which the King had for me, and to diminish that which he felt for the Duc de Choiseul.

Passion never reasons; if it had common sense it would

---

1 We add one of these songs for the amusement of the reader:

Dans Paris la grand' ville,
Garçons, femmes et filles
Ont tous le cœur débile,
Et poussent des hélas! ah! ah! ah!
La belle Bourbonnaise,
La maîtresse de Blaise,
Est très mal à son aise! aise! aise! aise!
Elle est sur le grabat, ah! ah! ah!

N'est-ce pas grand dommage
Qu'une fille aussi sage,
Au printemps de son âge,
Soit réduite au trépas? ah! ah! ah!
La veille d'un dimanche,
En tombant d'une branche,
Se fit mal à la hanche, hanche! hanche! hanche!
Et se démit le bras, ah! ah! ah!

On chercha dans la ville
Un médecin habile
Pour guérir cette fille.
Il ne s'en trouva pas, ah! ah! ah!
On mit tout en usage,
Médecin et herbage,
Bon bouillon et laitage, age! age! age!
Rien ne la soulagea, ah! ah! ah!

perceive that it cannot disgust a lover by vilifying his mistress, but, on the contrary, interests his self-love in supporting her. Thus all these intrigues scathed me not; I did not mention to my counsellor, Comte Jean, an insult which I met with in the park at Versailles from Madame de Grammont. I did not tell it to the King, not wishing to create any disturbance at Court. I avenged myself in my own way, and think I conducted myself remarkably well in this little adventure, which was as follows:

I was walking in the garden with Henriette, who had given me her arm; it was early in the morning, and the walks appeared solitary. We walked towards the side of the Ile-d'Amour, when we heard the steps of two persons who were walking behind us. Henriette turned her head, and then said to me: "Here are Mesdames de Brionne and de Grammont." I knew the latter but very slightly, and the former not at all. Certainly she could not have been there by chance; they knew I should be there, and wished to see me closely. Not suspecting what was to follow, I

Voilà qu'elle succombe;
Elle est dans l'autre monde.
Puisqu'elle est dans la tombe,
Chantons son *libéra*, ah! ah! ah!
Soyons dans la tristesse,
Et que chacun s'empresse
En regrettant sans cesse, esse! esse! esse!
Ses charmes et ses appas, ah! ah! ah!

Pour qu'on sonnât les cloches
On donna ses galoches,
Son mouchoir et ses poches,
Ses souliers et ses bas, ah! ah! ah!
Et à sa sœur Javotte
On lui donna sa cotte,
Son manteau plein de crotte, otte! otte! otte!
Avant qu'elle expirât, ah! ah! ah!

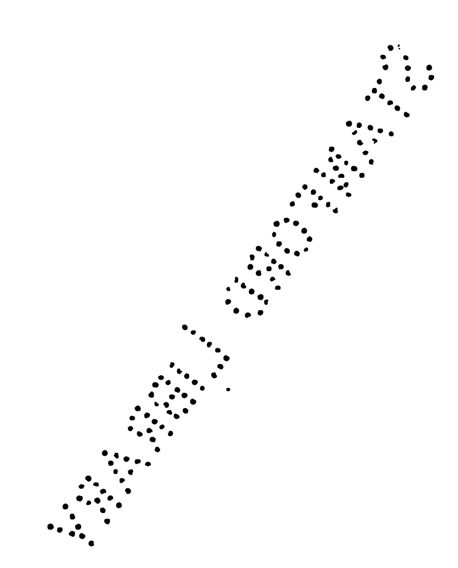
En fermant la paupière,
Ell' finit sa carrière,
Et sans drap et sans bière
En terre on l'emporta, ah! ah! ah!
La pauvre Bourbonnaise
Va dormir à son aise,
Sans fauteuil et sans chaise, aise! aise! aise!
Sans lit et sans sofa, ah! ah! ah!



The Temple of Love at the Petit Trianon, Versailles

Engraved by Charles Heath, from the Drawing by Captain Batty





was delighted at the *rencontre*. They passed us with head erect and haughty air, looked at me with a disdainful stare, laughed rudely and walked away. Although such behaviour offended me, it did not put me out of humour; I thought it very natural for Madame de Grammont to be irritated against me. Henriette had less magnanimity. She repeated so often how impertinent it was thus to insult a lady honoured by the bounties of the King, and so far excited my feelings, that, instead of returning, as prudence suggested, I followed the steps of these ladies. I did not proceed far before I rejoined them; they were seated on a bench, awaiting my arrival, as it appeared. I passed close to them, and at that moment the Duchesse de Grammont, raising her voice, said:

"It must be a profitable business to sleep with everybody."

I was excessively nettled, and instantly retorted: "At least I cannot be accused of making a forcible entry into any person's bed." The arrow went to the mark and penetrated deeply. The whole countenance of the Duchess turned pale, except her lips, which became blue. She would have said something foolish, but Madame de Brionne, more cool because less interested, placed her hand on her companion's mouth. I, in my turn, walked away with Henriette, laughing till tears came into my eyes at this pleasing victory.

The Duchesse de Grammont, who had no further inclination to laugh, told the story to her brother. He, who loved her excessively—too much so, perhaps—reprimanded her, nevertheless, and pointed out to her the disadvantage she must experience in an open struggle with me. Madame de Brionne was enjoined to secrecy, but that did not prevent her from confiding the affair to the Dowager Duchesse d'Aiguillon.

This latter was a lady of most superior merit, uniting to much wit more solid acquirements. She spoke English like a native. Her death, which happened in 1772, was a great misfortune to her son, to whom she gave the most

excellent counsel. She told my adventure to her daughter-in-law, who, excessively ambitious, saw without any pain the increasing attachment of her husband for me. I must tell you, in a parenthesis, that I always lived on the best terms with her, and that in my disgrace her friendship did not weaken. I must do her this justice. All my *faithful friends* have not been equally faithful towards me.

These two ladies knowing this occurrence, the Duc d'Aiguillon was not long kept in ignorance that something had happened. He came in haste to see me, and enquired what it was. But he asked in vain; I would not tell him. My secrecy hurt him, and on his return home he wrote to me. As I have great pleasure in telling you all that recalls this amiable gentleman to my mind, I will transcribe his letter, which will give you an opportunity of judging of the turn of his mind:

"I am very unhappy, madam. I had flattered myself with having obtained your confidence, but the obstinate silence which you have kept with me has cruelly informed me of my mistake. Allow the deep interest with which you have inspired me to offer a suggestion. You know nothing of forms; you are unacquainted with our usages; you require a friend who will direct and counsel you. Why should you not select a man entirely devoted to you, and as equally so as the King—the King whose entire affections you possess; and who could refuse them to you? I pause. Nothing is more dangerous than to use a pen where we have a heart overflowing like mine. Be more gracious towards me, I ask it of you in charity, and take no pleasure in driving me to twofold desperation. Adieu, madam, &c.

(Signed) THE DUC D'A——"

I read and read again this epistle; it delighted me from beginning to end. I found in it a depth of passion which did not displease me. I perfectly comprehended the obscurity of the latter phrase. I needed a sort of mentor superior to Comte Jean; and I preferred the Duc d'Aiguillon to any other because he pleased me. This feeling decided me, and I replied to him in these terms:

"You are wrong, monsieur, to be annoyed and to think that I am not disposed to grant you my confidence. It seems to me that I cannot place myself in better hands. However, we do not know each other wel enough for me to repose in you at once. See me frequently, and ther

with the habit of being in your company, I will allow myself to glide quietly into that state of confidence which you desire. Yes, I am indeed a stranger to all that passes around me; my only support is the protection with which the King honours me. That is all-powerful, but I will not employ it unseasonably or improperly. I know that I need the counsels of an honourable, prudent and well-informed man. I accept, therefore, of yours. I even ask them from you, if accompanied by your friendship. Adieu, monsieur. My regards are due to your uncle, the Maréchal, the first time you write to him."

This letter filled the Duc d'Aiguillon with joy. Some days afterwards the Prince de Soubise, who also wished to give me his advice, did not attain the same success. It must be owned that, for a man of the world, he went about it in a very clumsy way. He committed the extreme error of selecting Mademoiselle Guimard as mediatrix between himself and me. This lady came to me on the strength of our former acquaintance; she had so little sense as not to perceive the immense distance between us which a few days had caused, and that the opera-dancer kept by the Prince de Soubise could have no relation with the favourite of the King of France. I endeavoured, in vain, to make her perceive it without mortifying her too much. She always called me her dear friend, and fairly slaughtered me with saying that *her* Prince would protect me. It was singular for her to speak thus to me: to me from whom *her* Prince solicited protection. She did not confine herself to this. She even insinuated to me that I should be a gainer in some way. I laughed outright at this, and said to the *valet de chambre* who was stationed at the door, "Call mademoiselle's servants." This annoyed her excessively. All the muscles of her face were contracted with rage; but she restrained her wrath, saluted me with an assumed respect, and went away, after having so worthily acquitted herself of her foolish embassy.

She had quitted me an hour when I received a letter from him who had sent her. The Prince de Soubise begged me to grant him an interview, in which he could enter into an explanation. I replied that I would receive him, and he came the same day.

"I am much pained, madam," said he, on entering, "that

Mademoiselle Guimard has communicated with so little address what I wished to say to you."

"Prince, I think you would have done better to have been the bearer of your own message. You know my station here, and would not have ridiculed me as she has done."

M. de Soubise, much puzzled to know what she had said, asked me the question.

"Why," I replied, "she said that if I would follow your counsels you would repay me for my condescension."

"Ah! madam," he exclaimed, "she has completely murdered me. I only charged her to offer my services to you, and throw myself at your feet, as I do now."

"Rise, Prince; I do not accuse you of such folly, and promise not to mention it. It is necessary, however, that you should know I have but one part to play here—that of pleasing the King. Any other character will not suit me. Honour me with your friendship, and accept mine in return. I cannot, must not, have any other union with you."

Thus terminated this interview; it did not suit me to give the Prince de Soubise any hopes. He and all the Rohans would have lived on it; they would have turned my confidence to their gain, and, as they were for the most part sharpers, or something akin to it, my name would soon have been mixed up with some dirty transaction. This family was a hydra of avarice, and would alone have swallowed up all the wealth of France. If the King had taken one of the Rohan family for his mistress, I believe that the finance department would not have sufficed for one year's expenditure of this prodigal family. I had no objection to the Prince de Soubise coming to supper with me, but I did not feel myself disposed to give him any control over my mind. I should have been ill-guided by a man who had no government of himself.

If M. de Soubise did not depart satisfied, Madame de Marsan, his relative, to whom he related the bad success of his attempt, was not more so. She was a woman to have governed a kingdom, had she been allowed to do so. There was in her woman's head a capacity superior to that of all

the men of her family. She had a great deal of ambition, and all her actions were the results of a premeditated plan. She would have ruled the King, the Princes, Princesses, favourites, mistresses, the Court, the city, the parliaments and the army! Nothing would have been impossible to her; she was sufficient for anything. Circumstances did not give her the opportunity of displaying her genius. With great talents and keen perception, she was reduced to the government of her own family alone; that was but a trifling matter! In spite of her discontent, Madame de Marsan preserved a sort of neutrality towards me. She allowed all sort of ill to be spoken of me without ever repressing a word. She was then mute and passive. She saw me torn to pieces without any emotion.

However, when we were together she tried to cajole me in a thousand ways, all the time detesting me in her heart; and I, who could scarcely endure the sight of her, paid her a like number of little attentions. Thus, surrounded by hypocrites, I became one myself. We learn to howl in the society of wolves.

CHAPTER XII

The Duc de la Vauguyon and the Comtesse du Barri—The Marquis de Chauvelin and the Countess—M. de Montbarrey and the Countess—Intrigues—Lebel—Arrival of the Du Barri family—The Comte d'Hargicourt—The Demoiselles du Barri—Marriage of the Countess—The Marquis de Bonrepos—Correspondence—The broken glass.

THE Prince de Soubise was not the only person who wished to act in the capacity of mentor to me. The Duc de la Vauguyon also attempted to be the guide of my youth. This nobleman was too much of a Jesuit not to have a nose of prodigiously fine scent. He perceived that the wind was in my favour, and approached me in consequence. I have mentioned to you his first visit, and he made me a second a few days afterwards. He appeared very affable, very conciliatory. He several times particularly insisted, and that without any apparent motive, that the King, not now being engaged in the ties of wedlock, he should choose some agreeable companion, and assuredly could not do better than select me. The day after this visit, early in the morning, the Duke sent me a splendid bouquet, a homage which he afterwards repeated, and then called on me a third time.

During this visit, after a conversation on the embarrassments of an introduction at Versailles, he proposed that I should avoid them.

"You cannot conceal from yourself," he said, "how powerful will be the cabal against you; and, without including the Choiseuls, you will have especially to fear the pious party, who will only see in your intimacy with the King, allow me to say, a crying scandal, and one not profitable for religion."

"If the pious party unite with those who are not pious to destroy me," I rejoined, laughing, "I shall have all France against me."

"No; but perhaps all the Château. Yet there is a way of averting the storm. Attach yourself to the party of honest men who have been so greatly calumniated—the Jesuits. Philosophy, supported by the Duc de Choiseul, has repressed them; but the high clergy and the Mesdames Royales are strongly attached to them, and you would interest them in your fortune by favouring these worthy fathers.

"What! M. le Duc," cried I, "will Messeigneurs the Clergy of France, and Mesdames Royales and their suite, be favourable to me if I use my influence with the King in espousing the cause of the Society of Jesus?"

"Certainly, madam; and I am authorised to promise you this. I give you my word for it. Endeavour to re-establish the order, and there will not be one of us but will be zealous in supporting you."

"I certainly am desirous of pleasing your friends, but I can see that from the first moment of my appearance at Court I shall be at open war with the Choiseuls and the Parliaments."

"What matters it? I confess that the victory will not be easy at first, but there is no need to exaggerate the difficulties. It is true that the King has esteem for the Duc de Choiseul, but he has much affection for you, which avails much more. As for the Parliaments, he hates them, and for many years has been desirous of ridding himself of them entirely, and he will effect this by the help of God and your interference."

"This will be hard work for one so weak as I am."

"Oh, you are sufficiently powerful, I assure you. Only confide in me, the intermediary between you and my friends; let me guide you, and I will steer to the right port. What do you think of this, madam?"

"Oh! M. le Duc, it is not in a moment that we can give a positive reply to such grave matters. I content

myself in assuring you that I have for you as much confidence as respect, and should be very happy to obtain your protection."

"My protection! Oh, heaven, madam, you are jesting. It is I who should be honoured by your friendship."

"It is yours; but as yet I am nothing at Court, and can do nothing there until I have been presented. It is for my speedy presentation that my friends should labour now."

"We will not fail, madam; and if you will allow me to come from time to time to converse with you we can take our measures."

"Your visits will always be agreeable."

Such was the conversation which I had with the Duc de la Vauguyon. I have given it somewhat at length, because it was the preface to a deep intrigue which made a vast noise. I think I extricated myself very well from the net in which the Duke sought to catch me. I knew that his situation at Versailles compelled me to act with caution towards him. He was in good odour with Mesdames, had the ear of the young Dauphin and the Princes his brothers. He deceived me, like a true Jesuit as he was, in telling me that Mesdames were well disposed towards me; and on my side I cheated him with a promise of confidence and friendship which I never bestowed. Ah! my friend, again and again must I exclaim what a villainous place is a Court!

Whilst the Duc de la Vauguyon was seeking to enlist me under the banners of heaven, or the Jesuits, the Marquis de Chauvelin also essayed to make me his pupil; but as frank as he was amiable, this nobleman did not go to work in a roundabout manner. He came to me loyally, requesting me to consider his interests and mine.

"The King likes me," said he, "and I am attached to him body and soul. He tenderly loves you, and I should have no difficulty in doing the same thing; but as I am no longer of an age to inspire you with the passion which I should feel towards you, I content myself with your friendship. I have no enemy here, and no wish to hurt any person. Thus you need not fear that I shall urge you to any measures

that will compromise you. It is the hatred of the kingdom that you will have to fear. France is about to march in a better track, and the best plan is to follow its lead. It pains me, madam, to use language which may appear severe to you; we ought only to talk to you of your beauty and the love which it inspires. But, in your situation, even that beauty may serve the interests of France, and it is for that motive that I come to solicit you."

I replied to M. de Chauvelin with equal frankness. I told him that my sole intentions were to confine myself to the circle of my duties; that I had none but to please the King, and no intention of mixing myself up with State affairs. This was my plan, I can assure you. I flattered myself that I could follow it, not dreaming of those political broils into which I was precipitated in spite of myself. I added, nevertheless, that in my situation, which was delicate, I would not refuse the counsels of a faithful servant of the King, and that under this title M. de Chauvelin should be consulted on important occasions.

The Marquis de Chauvelin had too much good sense, too much knowledge of the world, not to perceive a refusal concealed under this politeness. The secret inclination of my heart had already led me to select the Duc d'Aiguillon for my director, and I could not reconcile myself to any other. The Marquis contented himself with asking me again for my friendship, which I willingly accorded him, and I have always found myself fortunate in his. Thus did I accept the offers of service from the Prince de Soubise, the Duc de la Vauguyon and the Marquis de Chauvelin.

A fourth sought to swell the ranks: the Comte (afterwards Prince) de Montbarrey. This gentleman made up in pretensions for what he lacked in talent. He was weak, self-important, selfish, fond of women, and endeavoured to preserve all the airs of a man of good breeding in the midst of the grossest debauchery. He was full of respect for himself and his house, of which in time of need he could cite the whole genealogy. His nomination was a real scandal; no one dreamt of his ever being Minister of War. It was one

of the thousand follies of old Maurepas, whom the late King understood well and called the ballad-maker of the Council.

The Comte de Montbarrey, whom I had known at Paris, came to me one fine day fully powdered, perfumed and apparelled. He had a smile on his lip, a loud tone and an insolent look. He came not to ask my friendship, but my obedience. He told me that he loved me to distraction, and of course my head must be equally turned by him. He amused me. I let him run out the full length of his line, and when he had spun it all out, I said to him, "Monsieur, be so good as to call to my recollection Madame de Merfort!"

She was one of the gambling ladies, and at her house I had formerly met the Chevalier de Montbarrey. My reply confounded him; he saw that he had gone the wrong way to work with me, and, excessively embarrassed, he raised the siege and left my presence.

Figure to yourself, my friend, what confidence a man lost in the crowd of lower courtiers could inspire me with; for to judge of the proceedings of the Comte de Montbarrey, it would have been necessary to have seen him as he then was, and not what he became since the imbecility of M. de Maurepas. When I told Comte Jean of his visit he would not believe such insolence. You must know that my brother-in-law also wished to direct me, but I did not consider him sufficiently clever. His marvellous genius was eclipsed in politics. He swore at my ingratitude, and I could only appease him by an offering of plenty of money.

In the midst of this cross-fire of intrigues, one was devised against me which might have terminated in my ruin; but, thanks to the indefatigable activity of Comte Jean, only served to fix me more firmly in my situation. Lebel, of whom I have said nothing for an age, came to me one day: his face was sad and his look serious. By his manner I augured that my reign had passed, and that I must quit my post. I awaited what he should say with mortal impatience. At length he begun thus:

"Madam, you have many bitter enemies, who are labouring to effect your ruin with a bloodthirstiness which nothing

can assuage. They have now spread a report that you are not married. This infamous calumny——"

"Ah! is that all?" said I with joy. "No, my dear Lebel, this time they do not calumniate me. The worthy creatures for once are right."

"What!" said Lebel, in a tone of alarm almost comic, "what! are you really not married?"

"No."

"Are you not the wife of the Comte Guillaume du Barri?"

"No."

"Then you have deceived the King and played with me."

"Lebel, my friend, take another tone. No one has any right to complain. You have given me to the King as a person to please him; I do so. The rest can be no matter of yours."

"Pardon me, madam, it is a matter of the greatest consequence to me. I am terribly compromised in this affair, and you with me."

Lebel told me that the Duchesse de Grammont had begged him to call upon her, and had bitterly reproached him about the mistress he had procured for the King. The Duchess affirmed that I was a nameless and unmarried creature, and added that it was his duty to make the King acquainted with these particulars, unless I, the pretended wife of Du Barri, would consent to go to England, when a large pension should be assured to me.

"No, my dear Lebel, I will not go to England. I will remain in France—at Versailles—at the Château. If I am not married I will be; the thing is easily managed."

Lebel, somewhat assured, begged me to send for Comte Jean; and when he came he (Lebel) recommenced his tale of grief.

"You are drowning yourself in a glass of water," said my future brother-in-law, who began to treat him with less ceremony. "Go back to the Duchesse de Grammont and tell her that madam was married at Toulouse. She will have an enquiry set on foot; in the meanwhile my brother will arrive and the marriage shall take place.

Then we will show the rebels a real Comtesse du Barri, and whether my sister-in-law be a lady of six months' standing or only of yesterday, that is of no consequence to the King of France."

After this conversation Lebel delivered the message to the Duchesse de Grammont, who told him that she should write to Toulouse to the attorney-general. This was what Comte Jean wished, and he was prepared for her.

But, you will say to me, was it certain that your asserted husband would marry you? Were there no difficulties to fear? None. Comte Guillaume was poor, talented and ambitious; he liked high living, and would have sold himself to the devil for riches; he was happy in marrying me. Comte Jean would not have ventured such a proposal to his other brother, the Comte d'Hargicourt, who had much good sense and great notions of propriety, and who at Versailles was called the *honnête homme*—a distinction not over flattering to his two brothers.

The same evening the whole family arrived, and was presented to me the next day. My two future sisters-in-law frightened me at first with their provincial manners and southern accent; but after a few minutes I found that this Gascon pronunciation had many charms with it. Mesdemoiselles du Barri were not handsome, but very agreeable. One was called Isabelle, whom they had nicknamed *Bischi;* the other's name was Fanchon, and her name had been abbreviated to *Chon*. The latter had much talent, and even brought to Versailles with her an instinctive spirit of diplomacy which would have done honour to a practised courtier. She would have been thought simple, unsophisticated, and yet was full of plot and cunning. I was soon much pleased with her, and the King became equally so. He was much amused at hearing her talk *patois* (provincially), or recite the verses of one Goudouli, a poet of Languedoc. He used to make her jump upon his knees, and although she had passed the first bloom of youth he played with her like a child. But what most particularly diverted the King was calling my sister-in-law by her nickname. "*Petite*

Chon," or "*Grande Chon*," he was always saying, "do this," "go there," "come here." Louis XV. did the same with his own daughters: he had amongst them a *Loque*, a *Graille*, a *Chiffe*, and they were the ladies Victoire, Adelaide and Sophie whom he thus elegantly designated. I soon saw the taste of the King for nicknames and I gave him one: it was *Lafrance*. So far from being angry with me, he laughed to tears every time that I called him so. I must confess, *en passant*, that the anecdote about the coffee is true.[1] I will only justify myself by saying that if I expressed myself coarsely it was not in consequence of my vulgar education, but because the King liked such modes of expression.

Let me revert to my marriage, which was performed very secretly at the parish of Saint Laurent. I believe the King knew of it, although he never alluded to it any more than myself. Thus the malice of my enemies was completely baulked in this affair. Some days afterwards Comte Jean received a letter from the attorney-general of the Parliament of Toulouse, M. the Marquis de Bonrepos-Riquet. This gentleman informed my brother-in-law that he had been requested to institute an enquiry at all the notaries and amongst all the registers of the parishes for the proof of my marriage; that he warned us to be on our guard; and that, whatever diligence he might be desired to employ, he should do nothing without informing us. We felt the obligation of this proceeding, and my brother-in-law thanked the attorney-general in my name as well as in his own. He told him that it was not at Toulouse that the parties interested should make their researches for my marriage certificate, but at Paris, either at the parish church of Saint Laurent or at the notary's Lepot d'Auteuil.[2]

---

1 Louis XV. had a habit of making his own coffee after dinner. One day the coffee boiled over the sides of the pot, and Madame du Barri cried out, "*Eh, Lafrance, ton café f—— le camp.*"

2 We humbly ask pardon of Madame du Barri, but we do not believe that notaries have anything to do with *marriage certificates*. They only make out *marriage contracts*.—Ed.

M. de Bonrepos gave part of this reply to the Duchesse de Grammont. Great was the bustle amongst the Choiseuls! I leave you to judge of the fury of the lady, or ladies—for the Comtesse de Grammont was no less irritated than the other—always prepossessed with the idea that others in pleasing the King were usurping the rights of their family. The Comtesse de Grammont had not half the talent of the Duchess; she had only her faults. She showed herself so rude and impertinent towards me that I was at length compelled, not to exile her of my own accord, but to allow that she should be so served. But I anticipate, for this did not occur until the following year.

The King by all his kindnesses endeavoured to recompense me for these attacks; he appeared charmed to see me surrounded by my husband's family. He placed amongst the pages the Vicomte Adolphe du Barri, son of Comte Jean, a young man of great promise, and whose destiny was so brief and so unfortunate. My husband's family testified much affection for me, as did the Duc d'Aiguillon, to whom I daily attached myself. He carefully kept from me all that could give me pain, and took a thousand precautions that no unpleasant reports should reach me. If we passed a short time without meeting, he wrote to me; and I confess I was delighted with a correspondence which formed my own style. Mademoiselle Chon, my sister-in-law, and I also wrote to each other, and that from one room to another. I remember that one day, having broken a glass of rock crystal which she had given me, I announced my misfortune in such a solemn style, and with so well-feigned a tone of chagrin, that the letter amused the whole family. The King saw it, and was so much pleased that he kept it, and next day sent me a golden goblet enriched with stones, which I gave to Chon, to whom it rightfully belonged.

CHAPTER XIII

Journey to Choisy—The Comtesse du Barri and Louis XV.—King of Denmark—The Czar Peter—Frederick II.—The Abbé de la Chapelle—An experiment—New intrigues—Secret agents—The Countess and Louis XV.—Of the presentation—Letter of the Countess to the Duc d'Aiguillon—Reply—Prince de Soubise.

Up to this period I had resided constantly at Versailles or Paris, according to the pleasure of the King, but had never followed His Majesty in any of his journeys. He wished to pass some days at his delightful château at Choisy, situated on the banks of the Seine. It was decided that I should be of the party, taking the name of the Baronne de Pamklek, a German lady, as that would save me from the embarrassment in which I should be placed with the King in consequence of my non-presentation. The Prince de Soubise, the Ducs de la Trémouille, d'Ayen and d'Aiguillon, and the Marquis de Chauvelin were also to attend the King. The King remained nearly the whole time with me, and the *entrée* of my apartment became a favour not accorded to everybody. A small committee met there and talked of everything except what is rational; and I can assure you that with such conversation time passes very quickly.

One day the King entered my apartment holding in his hand a letter.

"I am about to receive," said he, "a visit that will not give me much amusement. My brother of Denmark is traversing Europe, and is about to come to France. *Mon Dieu!* what inconvenient persons are your travelling Kings! Why do they leave their kingdoms? I think they are very well at home."

"Yes, Sire; but there is an excuse for them: they are

weary of admiring Your Majesty at a distance, and wish for the happiness of knowing you."

At this compliment the King rubbed his hands with a smile, which he always did when he was pleased, and then said:

"There is not in the hearts of foreign potentates the same affection towards my person as you feel. It is not me but France they wish to see. I remember that when very young I received a visit from the Czar Peter the Great, Peter the First, I mean to say. He was not deficient in sense, but yet behaved like a boor: he passed his time in running over the academies, libraries and manufactories: I never saw such an ill-bred man. Imagine him embracing me at our first interview, and carrying me in his arms as one of my valets would have done! He was dirty, coarse and ill-dressed. Well, all the Frenchmen ran after him; one would have supposed by their eagerness that they had never seen a regal countenance."

"Yet there was no occasion to run very far to see the handsome face of a King."

"Hold your tongue, Madame la Baronne de Pamklek, you are a flatterer. There is a crowned head who for thirty years has desired to visit France, but I have always turned a deaf ear, and will resist it as long as possible."

"Who is, Sire, the King so unfortunate as to be banished by you from Your Majesty's presence?"

"Who? the king of philosophers, the rival of Voltaire, my brother of Prussia. Ah! my dear Baronne, he is a bad fellow; he detests me, and I have no love for him. A King does wisely, certainly, to submit his works to the judgment of a Freron! It would be an outrageous scandal if he came here. Great and small would crowd around him, and there would not be twenty persons in my train."

"Ah! Sire, do you think so?"

"I am sure of it. The French nowadays do not care for their Kings, and *la Fronde* will be renewed at an early day. After all, philosophers believe that Frederick II. protects them. The honest man laughs both at them and me."

"At you, Sire? Impossible!"

[redacted]

"No, no; I know the impertinences he is guilty of towards me: but let him. I prefer making my court to the pretty women of my kingdom instead of to my pages. You may depend upon it that if he came to Versailles he would debauch some of them."

The King, charmed at having said this malicious speech, rubbed his hands again.

"Really, Sire," I replied, "I am astonished that this Prince, having such disgusting inclinations, can have so much *éclat* attached to his name."

"Ah, that is because he has great qualities: he will not allow himself to be cheated. Do you know that he is acquainted with the disposal of his finances to the last farthing?"

"Sire, he must be a miser."

"No, madam, he is a man of method. But enough of him. As to His Majesty of Denmark, although he would have been as welcome to stay at home, I shall receive him with as much attention as possible. The Kings of Denmark and Sweden are my natural allies."

The King changed the subject, and said, "There is an abbé, named La Chapelle, whom I think half cracked. He flatters himself that he can, through the medium of some apparatus, remain on the water without sinking. He begs my permission to exhibit his experiments before me; and if it would amuse you, we will have the exhibition tomorrow." I accepted the King's proposal with pleasure.

On the next day we went in a body to the terrace of the château. The King was near me with his hat in his hand; the Duc de Duras gave me his arm. M. l'Abbé, who was dressed in a sort of cork jacket, awaited us in a boat; he flung himself boldly into the water, moved about in any direction, drank, ate and fired off a gun. So far all went off well, but the poor abbé, to close the exhibition, wrote a letter to the King. The letter was carried in great pomp to His Majesty. It contained two verses from Racine, which had some double allusion to the experiment. This, you may be sure, was interpreted in the worst manner.

The Duc d'Ayen gave the finishing stroke to the whole on his opinion being asked by the King.

"Sire," said he, "such men ought to be thrown into the water; but all we can wish for them is that they should remain there."

The abbé was not more fortunate in the evening. He presented himself at supper, but the King did not address a word to him, and he was compelled to bear the malicious jokes of the courtiers. But let us leave Choisy and the experimentalist, and return to Versailles and myself.

My friends were excessively desirous for my presentation, which would decide my position at the Château. As yet I only had an equivocal existence, having rank neither at play, theatre nor public festival; so that if the King should be capricious I could be dismissed as one of the demoiselles of the Parc-aux-Cerfs. The Duc d'Aiguillon, whose attachment to me increased, calculated accurately all the advantages of this presentation. It would place me on the same footing with Madame de Pompadour, and compel the ministers to come and work with me. The Duke did not doubt but that M. de Choiseul would refuse to pay his devoirs to me, and that his resistance would lead to his fall. But it was necessary for my presentation, not only that the King should consent, for of that I was certain, but that he should desire it, and his desire could not be depended on.

Louis XV. was excessively timid: with an air which appeared of a dread-nought quality, he was fearful at heart. The clamours of Versailles kept him in alarm, and he maintained at his own Court and at foreign Courts secret agents, whose only care was to report to him the complaints of the people and the sarcasms and satires of society. The King was attached to these men; and when the force of circumstances compelled him to abandon them, he still supported them clandestinely with all his power. A proof of what I advance may be known as regards the Chevalier, or Chevalière, d'Eon—I know not which. But these secret agents were unknown to the King, all devoted to the Parliaments, and

consequently inimical to courtiers, favourites, and especially mistresses. God knows how they disposed of us! By these unpropitious channels the King had learnt all the hatred which was borne to Madame de Pompadour. He was afraid of exciting the discontent of the people by announcing another mistress, and was none the less intimidated at the severity of Madame Louise, and the ill-humour of his other children. He loved his pleasure much, but his ease more.

Comte Jean, who was restrained by no considerations, advised me to overleap all difficulty by asking the King myself for the favour which I coveted. His advice seemed rational, and I was, besides, urged on to do so. Each day brought to me impertinences said of me by the noble ladies of the Château. I learned that they boasted that I should never set foot in the great apartments, but should remain the obscure mistress of the King. This made me impatient, and by degrees deprived me of my natural gaiety.

One day when the King was with me he perceived my want of spirits.

"What ails you?" said he, with the greatest solicitude.

"What ails me!" replied I; "I wish I were dead, rather than see myself the butt of all the scandal of the foul-mouthed gossips of your Court."

The King suspecting the confidence I was about to repose in him, was sorry he had asked for it, and was silent. He began to play the tattoo with his fingers on the chimney-piece. At this moment Mademoiselle Chon came in. The King, delighted at seeing her, instantly enquired into her state of health. She, after a profound obeisance, said:

"Sire, how can I be well when there is trouble in my family?"

"Ah, *bon Dieu!* what is this?" said he, turning to me.

"I am insulted—hooted. They say that I have the misfortune to be no longer in the good graces of Your Majesty."

"Ah, tell them they lie in their throats," replied the King, kissing me on the forehead; "you are the woman of my heart, and she whom I would fain load with honours."

"Your Majesty speaks to me," I answered, "with great condescension" (my sister-in-law left the room that she might not spoil the explanation), "but yet you are the cause of the insolence which I am subjected to from the vile crew."

"What is the matter with you to-day? In truth you are a perfect little devil."

"I wish I were, that I might punish evil tongues, since there is no King of France to avenge me."

"You are severe, madam," replied Louis XV., turning his imposing and handsome face towards me, and to which he vainly endeavoured to give an air of anger. I saw my success, and added:

"Yes, Sire, it is insupportable for me to think that I am supposed not to possess your friendship, and that I only play the part of a temporary friend. It makes me wretched. You must not be angry if I complain of you to your Royal self."

"Well, well, you madcap, what must I do? whom must I banish?"

"Oh, Sire, no one. With your august support I fear no person—nothing but appearances."

"You are an excellent creature. In your place Madame de Pompadour would have imprisoned half France."

"That was because she loved revenge better than she loved Your Majesty. As for me, I should be miserable if I were the cause of one single family complaining against you."

The King, delighted at these words, which really came from my heart, embraced me tenderly two or three times, and said:

"I wish your enemies could understand you, for they would soon be at your knees. But if we imprison or exile no person, how shall we strike terror into them?"

"It is not terror but envy that I would excite. Let me be presented at Court, and all my wishes will be satisfied."

"I cannot for the life of me divine why you should lay so much stress on coming to weary yourself with the ceremonies of myself and my daughters. Heaven preserve

you from all the irksomeness of Court ceremony!" and Louis XV. sighed. "Did you ever think," he added, "of all the vanities, all the interests I have to manage; all the intrigues that are perpetually agitating, and all the opposition made to me? The Court, the city, the people will rise against me; they will clamour, groan, complain; verse, prose, epigram and pamphlet will appear in uninterrupted succession. You would be first attacked; and hatred will, perhaps, extend to me. I shall see again the times when the Damiens, in the name of the Parliaments, as one party says—in the name of the Jesuits, as the other party says; and, what is more true, in the name——"

The King suddenly paused; a deep shade of melancholy settled on his features, his noble head dropped on his bosom. Louis XV. remained for some time motionless.

"Well, well!" he at length exclaimed, attempting to force a smile, "I will write to the ladies De Grammont to inform them that they need not give themselves the trouble to remain near me at the Château."

On hearing these words I darted towards the door and went into my chamber. The King followed, and finding there Mademoiselle Chon, who was working at some tapestry, said to her:

"Mademoiselle, I confide to your care, and by oral *lettre de cachet*, the most amiable little devil in France. And now, Mademoiselle du Barri, having nothing further to add, I pray God to take you to His powerful and holy keeping."

After this pleasantry the King, delighted at the gay termination of a somewhat serious scene, went, or rather vanished; for, to use a proverbial expression, he ran like a thief.

As soon as I was alone with my sister-in-law I told her all that had passed.

"I see," said she, "that the King is fearful of offending the Duke de Choiseul and giving annoyance to his daughters. But a step must be determined on which will place you out of the reach of complete disgrace. Would it not be best to get some nobleman, who can do so with influence, to speak to him on the subject? If the Duke de Richelieu were here——"

"But," I instantly exclaimed, "have we not his nephew, the Duke d'Aiguillon? He stands well with the King, and I am certain will take the most lively interest in all that concerns me."

"I have no doubt of it," said Chon, with a sly look. "Write to him to come, and you can arrange your ulterior proceedings."

On this advice, which was quite to my taste, I went instantly to my writing-table, the last present which the King had made me. It was made of silver-gilt and china slabs, beautifully painted. When I opened it a glass was lifted which reflected my countenance. I sat down and wrote the following note to the Duke d'Aiguillon:

"You will be pleased. I want your assistance—I really want it. The moment has come for deserving all my confidence. Will you have it at all risks and perils? Reflect well before you undertake this. If you accept, come to-day at five o'clock precisely, neither sooner nor later."

A little while afterwards the following reply was brought:

"One thing displeases me in your letter, which else enchants me. You appear to doubt my obedience. Am I not your slave? And when you say to me *Go*, will I not *go?* Rely on me as on yourself—even more; for your vivacity may lead you into error, and I shall preserve my reason. Yes, madam, I will, when near you, preserve my reason when your interests are at stake. At the hour fixed I shall have the honour to lay at your feet my respectful homage and boundless devotion."

It was impossible to express a real sentiment with more delicacy. I was charmed at it, no longer doubting that the Duke would consider my interests as his own. I awaited the hour of five with impatience, when my good fortune brought the Prince de Soubise. After the first compliments:

"Well, Madame la Comtesse, when is your presentation to take place?"

"I do not know, M. le Maréchal; there are obstacles in the way. I fear that they who wish to injure me abuse their influence with the King."

"I see that His Majesty hesitates, although he is desirous of giving you station. He must be stimulated to know that

he is master; and that if he shows any wavering in this particular, it will be made use of to govern him hereafter."

Heartily did I applaud the language of M. de Soubise. I did not suspect that the dear Prince had another motive behind. At the end of the interview he said:

"Madam, you would not have been as you now are had you been more conciliatory towards me. I know the King, and know how to manage him. I flatter myself that you would have been presented ere this had you deigned to listen to my advice."

"Did I reject it? Was I wrong in declining to have Mademoiselle Guimard as ambassadress? Were you assured of her silence? Might she not have compromised us?"

"You are right. I did as one would have done at your age, and you have done as I should do at mine. But there is always time to amend."

"Certainly, Prince."

"You accept my advice, then."

"Yes," I replied, seeing the defile into which he wished to entrap me; "yes, if I am presented through your influence, from that moment you become my guide and mentor. But it is important that the presentation be not delayed. I rely on you to speak to the King this very day about it, and I know that he will give me every particular of the immense service you will render me."

For once the madcap girl got the better of the practised courtier. M. de Soubise, taken in his own snare, politely excused himself, and left me with an assurance that he would speak to the King. He did speak, but obtained nothing more than any other. You will see in my next letter that I did not arrive at the accomplishment of my wishes without much trouble. There were in this affair more intrigues for and against me than were afterwards set on foot to decide on war with America.

CHAPTER XIV

The Countess and the Duc d'Aiguillon—M. de Soubise—Louis XV. and the Duc d'Aiguillon—Letter from the Countess to the King—Answer of the King—The *Nouvelles à la Main*—The Countess and Louis XV.—The supper—The Court ladies mystified—The Countess and M. de Sartines.

I WAS congratulating myself on the skill which I had displayed in my conference with the Prince de Soubise when the Duc d'Aiguillon entered.

"Good heavens!" he said, kissing my hand very tenderly, "into what inquietude did you throw me by your dear and cruel letter. The ambiguity of your style has caused me inexpressible sorrow; and you have added to it by not allowing me to come to you at the first moment."

"I could not; I thought it would be dangerous for you to appear before the King previously to having seen me."

"Would the King have thought my visit strange?" asked the Duke, not without some emotion.

"That is not the point. The black spite of my enemies has not yet deprived me of the counsels of a friend. But as it is necessary to speak to the King in my favour, I wish that he should not know that you do so at my request."

After this I related to the Duke my conversation with the King.

"Your situation is delicate," said he to me, "but it should not trouble you. The King is weak; we must give him courage; it is his pliancy of disposition rather than his resistance that we have to contend with, and I go to act upon it."

I then informed the Duke of what had passed between me and the Prince de Soubise. When I had finished the story, the Duke replied:

"Expect nothing from the Prince de Soubise; he will speak, no doubt—but how? in a jesting, laughing way. If, however, you think he can at all serve you, give him all your confidence."

"No, no, never," I replied with quickness; "it is not a thing to be done lightly; we do not select a confidant, counsellor or friend at random. Do you not know this, M. le Duc? It is requisite that the heart of the one who speaks should repose itself on the heart of the friend who listens. I repeat to you that I have no feeling of confidence towards M. de Soubise. In fact," I added, with visible and troubled emotion, "my choice is made, and you have too much heroism to wish to combat it."

At these flattering words the Duke precipitated himself at my feet, and swore to support my cause with all his power and interest. I replied that I fully relied on his devotion and prudence. Comte Jean entered, and it was agreed between us three that I should say no more to the King of my presentation before the Duc d'Aiguillon had spoken to him of it; that I should content myself with complaining without peevishness; and that we should leave the opening measure to the Prince de Soubise, and let him break the ice to His Majesty.

The Prince de Soubise behaved exactly as the Duke had told me. He came to me the next morning with a mysterious air, which already informed me of all he had to say. He said that he had vainly tormented the King; that His Majesty wished things to remain just as they were, and desired that, until a new order of things, nothing should be altered.

"I am sorry for it, M. le Maréchal," I replied. "Whilst I am in this precarious situation, whilst I remain in a corner of the stage as a confidant of tragedy, I can do nothing for my friends, particularly for you, M. le Maréchal."

"On the contrary, madam," he replied, "the King will be more disposed to listen to you whilst supposing that your influence is unknown."

"Oh," cried I, with a feeling of anger, "you gentlemen courtiers think of nothing but politics! As for me, who am a woman, I have other matters for consideration—I must

have honours, title, rank. My self-love suffers cruelly when I see myself immolated by the fear which the Mesdames de Grammont and three or four other intriguers of their party are able to excite."

The Prince was somewhat startled at the freedom of language which I used towards ladies in such credit at Court. He begged me to moderate my feelings and be less moved and excited. By this the Prince de Soubise lost the esteem which I might have accorded him, and the second place in my counsels which I might have given him.

I told the Duke, who came to see me the moment afterwards, of the failure of the Prince's attempt. He told me that he had not hoped for a better result. He went to the King, flattering himself with hopes of better success, but did not find him.

The daughters of Louis XV. had united against me with a fury which nothing could justify. They were incessantly talking scandal of my past life, as if there were only saints at Court, as if they had no pranks of their own to reproach themselves with. All the Château knew of their lovers, and there was *living* evidence of the tenderness of Madame Adelaide. As for Madame Louise, she was an angel upon earth, and was the only one who did not join in the cry against me. On the other hand, the King, whilst he had but little love for his dear daughters, preserved towards them a complaisance and external appearance of kindness which was a substitute for paternal love. When Mesdames Royales cried out, he stopped his ears with his two hands, and seemed, whilst looking proudly at France, to say, "Am not I a good father, and are not my daughters very happy, for I let them cry out with all their might?"

The next day the Duc d'Aiguillon went again to the King, and found him bewildered with family scenes and the murmurings of the Choiseuls. When my ambassador had duly delivered his message, the King asked him if he, as well as the Prince de Soubise, had been set upon his haunches by me.

The Duke, nothing intimidated at this, told the King

that, far from having wished that he should be my interpreter, I had requested him not to allude to the matter.

"Why, then," said Louis XV., laughing, "do you not follow the advice of the Countess?"

"Because I entertain a sincere attachment for her, and am vexed to hear it said that there are persons who lead Your Majesty."

"Who are the slanderers that hold such language?"

"They surround you, Sire. There is not a female here but affirms that you dare not decide on the presentation of the Countess."

"I alone am master, and will let them know it when the opportunity arrives; but the present moment is not fitting. The Countess knows how well I love her; and if she would prove her friendship towards me she will remain quiet for some time."

The Duke thought it best to be silent, and came to me. After relating the conversation, he added, "Do not appear at all dejected; the King would not then visit you, lest he should find you out of temper. Were I you I should write to him; a word of peace would set him at ease."

I approved this advice and instantly penned the following letter:

"SIRE,—They tell me that Your Majesty has been tormented on my account. It is a treason of which I alone could believe myself capable. But why should I complain? You have done so much for me that I ought to esteem myself happy. Your august friendship consoles me through all my annoyances. Be assured that henceforth I shall pout no more. I will be the best sheep in the world, relying on my shepherd for not having my fleece cut too closely; for, after all, I think I am the petted ewe, &c."

A short time afterwards a page brought me a splendid box of bonbons, with a pair of ruby ear-rings surrounded with diamonds, and this short billet:

"Yes, assuredly you are my pet ewe, and always shall be. The shepherd has a strong crook, with which he will drive away those who would injure you. Rely on your shepherd for the care of your tranquillity and the peace of your future life."

In the evening the King visited me. He was embar-

rassed; but I set him at ease by showing him a laughing countenance, talking only of his present, which I had in my ears, and shaking my head about to keep the drops in motion, which sparkled with great brilliancy. He was pleased at this, and did not leave me all the evening. In the morning we were the best friends in the world.

Some days elapsed, when Comte Jean came to me, bringing two infamous articles which had appeared in the *Nouvelles à la Main*, and were directed against me. They were atrocious, and deeply chagrined me. I placed them on the mantelpiece, where all who came in could see them. The Duc de Duras read them, and said, "Conceal these atrocities from the King."

"No," was my reply, "I wish him to read them, that he may know how his affections are respected, and how the police of Paris is employed in doing its duty to the throne."

These last words annoyed M. de Duras, between whom and M. de Sartines there was a connection. The Duke was indebted to the Lieutenant-general of Police for the especial surveillance which he kept over a young girl, of whom he, the Duc de Duras, was foolishly enamoured. Trembling for his *dear friend* M. de Sartines, he wrote to him in haste, but had not courage or talent enough to undertake the defence of the guilty person.

The King came as usual. His general station was at the chimneypiece, where he amused himself with looking at the baubles that ornamented it. The *Nouvelles à la Main* fell in his way. He read them once, then again; then, without uttering a word, threw them into the fire. I observed him, and saw that he was full of emotion, which he sought to conceal, but the anger soon burst forth. The Prince de Soubise, who supped with us that evening, asked the Duc de Duras if he had read the *Gazette de France*.

"No," was the reply; "I seldom read such nonsense."

"And you are quite right," said the King. "There is at present a most inconceivable mania for writing. What is the use, I ask you, gentlemen, of this deluge of books and pamphlets with which France is inundated? They only

contain the spirit of rebellion. The freedom of writing ought not to be given to everybody. There should be in a well-regulated State seven or eight writers, not more; and these under the inspection of Government. Authors are the plague of France; you will see whither they will lead it."

The King spoke this with an animated air; and if, at this moment, M. de la Vrillière had come to ask for a *lettre de cachet* against a writer, the King would not have refused it.

"Besides," added the King, in a tone of less anger, but no less emphatically, "I see with pain that the police does not do its duty with regard to all these indignities."

"Yet," said the Duc de Duras, "M. de Sartines does wonders."

"Then why does he tolerate such insults? I will let him know my discontent."

The Duc de Duras was alarmed, and kept his mouth closed. The King then, resuming his gaiety, bantered the two gentlemen on their secret intrigues; then, changing the conversation suddenly, he talked of the expected arrival of the King of Denmark.

"Duc de Duras," said he, "you and your son must do the office of master of the ceremonies to His *Polar* Majesty. I hope you will endeavour to amuse him."

"Yes, Sire."

"Mind, what you undertake is no joke. It is no easy matter to amuse a King."

This was a truth which I perceived every moment, and our monarch was not the one to be amused with trifling exertion. Frequently when he entered my apartment he threw himself on an ottoman and yawned most excessively—yes, yawned in my company. I had but one mode of rousing him from this apathy, but it was a sure one. I spoke of the high magistracy and its perpetual resistance to the throne. Then the King, aroused, instantly sprang from his seat, traversed the room with rapid strides, and declaimed vigorously against the *black gowns;* thus he styled the Parliaments. I confess, however, that I only had recourse to the *black gowns* at the last extremity. Little did I think that at a later period I

should league myself against them. On the one hand, the Duc d'Aiguillon hated them mortally; and on the other, the Comte Jean, like a real Toulousan, would have carried them in his slippers; so that, wavering between the admiration of the one and the hatred of the other, I knew not which to listen to or which party to side with. But to return to present matters.

The King was always thinking of the *Nouvelles à la Main*, and determined to avenge me as openly as I had been attacked. Two or three days afterwards he gave a supper, to which he invited the Duchesse and Comtesse de Grammont, Madame de Forcalquier, the Princesse de Marsan, the Maréchale de Mirepoix, and the Comtesses de Coigny and de Montbarrey. They were seated at table laughing and amusing themselves; they talked of the pleasure of being *to themselves*, of having no *strangers;* they pierced me with a hundred thrusts; they triumphed! and yet the King was laughing in his sleeve. At a premeditated signal the Duc d'Aiguillon, one of the guests, asked His Majesty if he had seen the Comtesse du Barri that day. This terrible name, thrown suddenly into the midst of my enemies, had the effect of a thunderclap. All the ladies looked at each other first, and then at the King and the Duc d'Aiguillon, preserving profound silence. His Majesty then replied that he had not had the happiness of visiting me that day, not having had one moment's leisure, then eulogised me at great length, and ended by saying to the Duke, "If you see the Countess before I do, be sure to say that I drank this glass of wine to her health."

The ladies did not anticipate this. The Duchesse de Grammont particularly, in spite of long residence at Court, turned pale to her very ears, and I believe that but for etiquette she would have fallen into a swoon. I learnt afterwards from the Maréchale de Mirepoix that the Duchess, on going home, gave herself up to a fit of rage, which did not terminate even on the following day. When the King related this occurrence to me, he was as proud of it as if he had done a most courageous deed.

But I have omitted a day which was of importance to me in its consequences. I mean the day which followed that on which I had complained to the Duc de Duras of M. the Lieutenant of Police.

Early in the morning my sister-in-law came into my room.

"Sister," said she, "Comte Jean is here with M. de Sartines, who begs to pay his respects to you. Will you receive him?"

"M. de Sartines! Yes, let him come in; I will treat him as he deserves."

Comte Jean then came in, preceded by the Lieutenant of Police, who wore a large peruke with white powder, and curled with the utmost care. Wigs were his mania, and he had a room filled from floor to ceiling with these ornaments. The Duc d'Ayen said that he should never be in trouble about the Council of State, for, in case of need, it might be found and replenished from the house of the Lieutenant of Police. Let us leave wigs and revert to M. de Sartines.

He appeared before me with the air of Tartuffe, and, forgive the phrase, *en vrai capon*.

"Madam," said he to me, "I have been informed that I am in disgrace with you, and have come to enquire how I may extricate myself from this misfortune."

"You ought to know, sir. Twice in one month have I been shamefully insulted; and yet the first intimation of such a thing ought to have put you on your guard."

M. de Sartines, whom my tone had much surprised, endeavoured to justify himself, when Comte Jean said to him:

"My dear Lieutenant of Police, all you have said goes for nothing; one thing is certain, and that is, that there is a deficiency of respect towards my sister-in-law. You say that it is not your fault; what proof do you give us of this? What enquiries have you made? What measures have you taken? Any? Why do you come to us if you aid our enemies?"

M. de Sartines would fain have ensconced himself in his own dignity.

"M. du Barri," was his reply, "I shall render an account of my conduct to the King."

"Very well, sir," I replied; "but do not suppose that either you or the Choiseuls can give me any cause of fear."

M. de Sartines was thunderstruck; my boldness astonished him. At length he said:

"Madam, you are angry with me causelessly; I am more negligent than culpable. It is useless to say this to the King."

"I will not conceal from you, sir, that he knows it all, and is greatly discontented with you."

"I am lost, then," said M. de Sartines.

"Lost! not precisely," replied Comte Jean; "but you must decide, at once and for ever, which party you will join. If you are with us, they will use you harshly; if you take the opposite party, look to yourself. Choose."

After some turnings and twistings, accompanied with compliments, M. de Sartines declared that he would range himself under our banner. Then I extended to him my hand in token of reconciliation; he took it with respect, and kissed it with gallantry. Up to this time we had conversed with feelings of restraint, and standing; but now we seated ourselves, and began a conference, in form, as to the manner of preventing a recurrence of the offensive outrages against me. As a proof of good intention M. de Sartines told me the author of the two articles of which I complained. He was a wretch named Ledoux, who, for 1,200 livres per annum, wrote down all those who displeased the Duchesse de Grammont. This lady had no fear of doing all that was necessary to remove every obstacle to the publication of such infamies.

After M. de Sartines had given us all the details which we desired, and after I had promised to reconcile him to his master, he went away delighted with having seen me. Believe me, my friend, it is necessary to be as handsome as I am—that is to say, as I was—to seduce a lieutenant of police.

CHAPTER XV

The Sieur Ledoux—The *lettre de cachet*—The Duc de la Vrillière—Madame de Langeac—M. de Maupeou—Louis XV.—The Comte Jean.

On that very evening, the King having come to me, I said to him:

"Sire, I have made acquaintance with M. de Sartines."

"What! has he been to make friends with you?"

"Something like it; but he has appeared to me less culpable than I thought. He had only yielded to the solicitation of my personal enemy."

"You cannot have one at my Court, madam; the Lieutenant of Police would have done well not to have named her to you."

"Thanks to him, however, I shall now know whom I ought to mistrust. I know also who is the author of the two scurrilous paragraphs."

"Some scamp, no doubt; some beggarly scoundrel."

"A man named Ledoux."

"Ah! I know the fellow. His bad reputation has reached me. It must be stopped at last."

So saying, Louis XV. went to the chimney and pulled the bell-rope with so much vehemence that ten persons answered it at once.

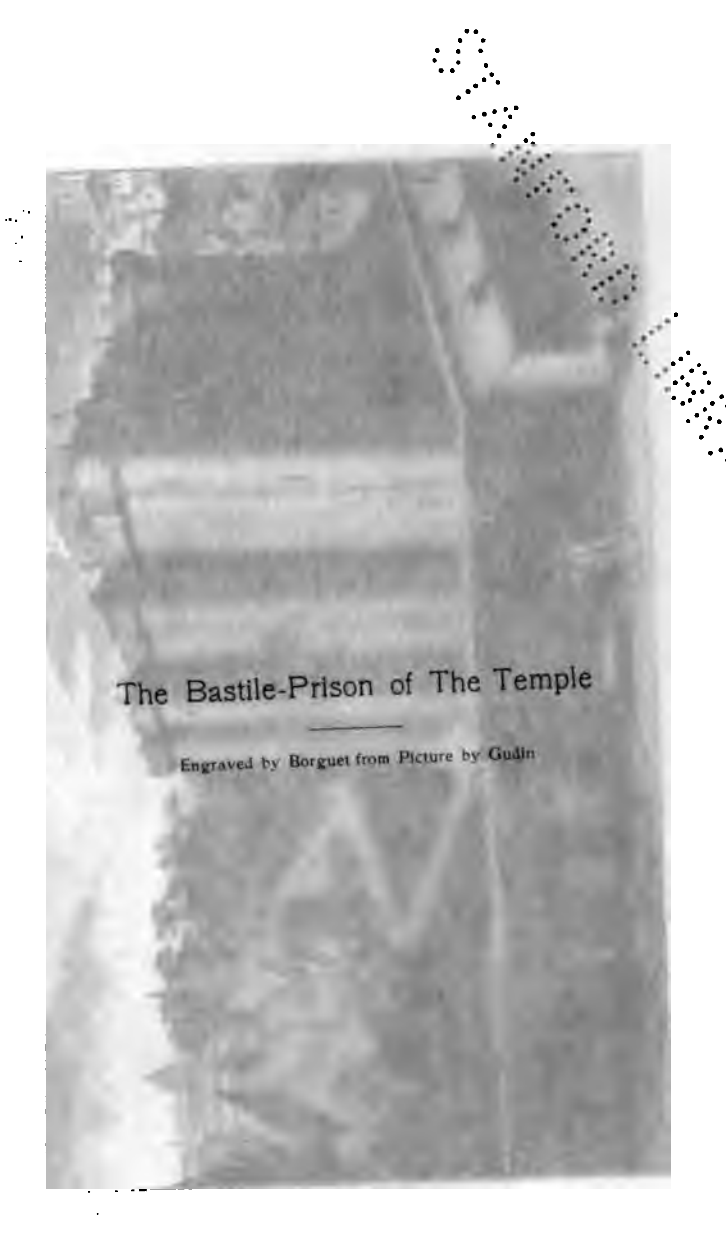
"Send for the Duc de la Vrillière; if he be not suitably attired, let him come in his dressing-gown—no matter, so that he appears quickly."

On hearing an order given in this manner, a stranger might have supposed the King crazy, and not intent on imprisoning a miserable libeller. I interceded in his favour, but Louis XV., delighted at an opportunity of playing the King at a small cost, told me that it was no person's business, and he would be dictated to by no one. I was silent, reserving

myself until another opportunity when I could undertake the defence of the poor devil.

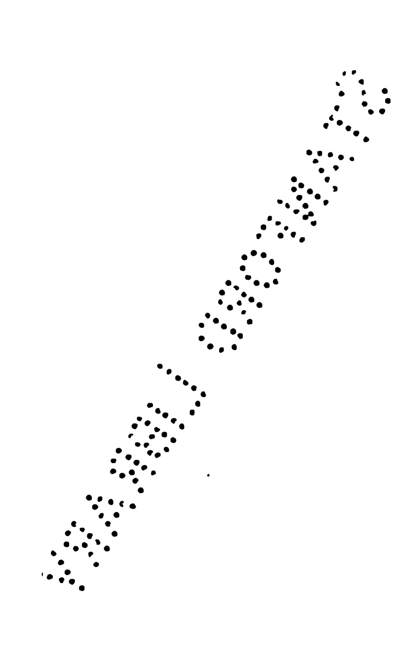
The Duc de la Vrillière arrived, not in a dressing-gown as the King had authorised, but in magnificent costume. He piqued himself on his expenditure, and always appeared superbly attired, although the splendour of his apparel could not conceal the meanness of his look. He was the oldest Secretary of State, and certainly was the least skilful, least esteemed, least considered. Some time after his death someone said of him, in the presence of the Duc d'Ayen, that he had been an unfortunate man, for he had been all his life the butt of public hatred and universal contempt. "Rather say," replied the Duke, "that he has been a fortunate man, for if justice had been rendered to him according to his deserts he would have been hanged at least a dozen times."

The Duc d'Ayen was right: M. de la Vrillière was a brazen-faced rogue—a complete thief, without dignity, character or heart. His cupidity was boundless; the *lettres de cachet* emanated from his office, and he carried on an execrable trade in them. If any person wished to get rid of a father, brother or husband, they only had to apply to M. de la Vrillière. He sold the King's signature to all who paid ready money for it. This man inspired me with an invincible horror and repugnance. For his part, as I was not disgusting, he contented himself with hating me: he was animated against me by his old and avaricious mistress, Madame de Langeac, *alias* Subutin. Langeac could not endure me. She felt that it was better to be the mistress of Louis XV. than that of the *petit La Vrillière*, for so her lover was called at Court. I knew that she was no friend of mine, and that her lover sided with the Choiseuls against me, and was consequently the more delighted to see the little scoundrel come to receive the order for avenging me. He entered with an air of embarrassment, and made me a salute as low as to the King. His Majesty, in a brief, severe tone, ordered him to send the Sieur Ledoux to Saint Lazare forthwith. He departed without reply, and half an hour afterwards returned to say that it was done. The King then said to him:



The Bastile-Prison of The Temple

Engraved by Borguet from Picture by Gudin



[redacted]

"Do you know this lady?"

"No, Sire."

"Well, I desire you henceforward to have the greatest consideration for her as my best friend, and whoever wishes to prove his zeal for me will honour and cherish her."

The King then invited him to sup with us, and I am sure that during the whole repast I was the hardest morsel he had to digest.

Some days afterwards I made acquaintance with a person much more important than the little Duke, and destined to play a great part in the history of France. I mean M. de Maupeou, the late Chancellor, who, in his disgrace, would not resign his charge. M. de Maupeou possessed one of those firm and superior minds which, in spite of all obstacles, changes the face of empires. Ardent, yet cool; bold, but reflective; neither the clamours of the populace astonished, nor did any obstacles arrest him. He went on in the direct path which his will chalked out. Quitting the magistracy, he became its most implacable enemy, and after a deadly combat he came off conqueror. He felt that the moment had arrived for freeing Royalty from the chains which it had imposed on itself. It was necessary, he has said to me a hundred times, for the Kings of France in past ages to have a popular power on which they could rely for the overturning of the feudal power. This power they found in the high magistracy; but since the reign of Louis XIII. the mission of the Parliaments had finished, the nobility was reduced, and they became no less formidable than the enemy whom they had aided in subduing.

"Before fifty years," pursued M. de Maupeou, "Kings will be nothing in France, and Parliaments will be everything."

Talented, a good speaker, even eloquent, M. de Maupeou possessed qualities which made the greatest enterprises successful. He was convinced that all men have their price, and that one has only to find out the sum at which they are purchasable.[1] As brave personally as a Maréchal of France,

1 This gentleman would have been an able coadjutor for Sir Robert Walpole.—TRANS.

his enemies (and he had many) called him a coarse and quarrelsome man. Hated by all, he despised men in a body and jeered at them individually; but little sensible of the charms of our sex, he only thought of us casually and as a means of relaxation. This is M. de Maupeou painted to the life. As for his person, you know it as well as I do. I have no need to tell you that he was small and unshapely, and that his complexion was yellow, bordering upon green. It must be owned, however, that his face, full of thought and intelligence, fully compensated for all the rest.

You know how, as First President of the Parliament of Paris, he succeeded his father as Vice-Chancellor. At the resignation of the titular M. de Lamoignon,[1] the elder Maupeou received his letters of nomination, and as soon as they were registered he resigned in favour of his son. The Choiseuls had allowed the latter to be nominated, relying on finding him a creature. I soon saw that the Choiseuls were mistaken.

It was in the month of October that Henriette, always my favourite, came to me with an air of unusual mystery to say that a black and ugly gentleman wished to see me; that on the usual reply that I was not visible he had insisted, and sent at the same time a cautiously-sealed note. I took it, opened it, and read these words:

"The Chancellor of France wishes to have the honour of presenting his respectful homage to Madame la Comtesse du Barri."

"Let him come in," I said to Henriette.

"I will lay a wager, madam, that he comes to ask some favour."

"I believe," replied I, "that he is more frequently the solicited than the solicitor."

Henriette went out, and in a few minutes led in, through the private corridors which communicated with my apartment, His Highness Monseigneur Réné Nicolas Charles Augustin de Maupeou, Chevalier and Chancellor of France. As soon as he entered I conceived a good opinion of him, although I had only seen him walk. His step was firm

1 In September, 1768.

and assured, like that of a man confident in the resources of his own talents.

"Madame la Comtesse du Barri," he said, "would have a right to complain of me if I did not come and lay my person at her feet. I had the more impatience to express to her my devotion as I feared she had been prejudiced against me."

"How, Monseigneur?"

"But the gate by which I entered the Ministry——"

"Is not agreeable to me, as being that of my enemies. But I feel assured that you will not side with them against me."

"Certainly not, madam; it is my wish to give you pleasure in everything, and I flatter myself I may merit your friendship."

After many other compliments, the Chancellor asked me, with much familiarity, when my presentation was to take place, and why it had not yet occurred. I replied that the delay arose from the intrigues of the Choiseuls, and the King shrank from the discontent of a handful of courtiers.

"I am sorry for it," said M. de Maupeou; "in the first place, madam, because of the interest I take in you, and also because of His Majesty, for it would be a means of striking terror into the opposing party. You know, madam, how annoying Parliaments are to all your friends, and with what bitterness those of Bretagne and Paris at this moment are pursuing the Duc d'Aiguillon."

"Do you think," I replied with emotion, "that matters are unfavourable towards him?"

"I hope not; but he must be warmly supported."

"Ah! I will aid him with all my influence. He is no doubt innocent of the crimes imputed to him."

"Yes, certainly. He has done no other wrong than to defend the authority of the Crown against the enmity of the Parliaments."

We continued some time to talk of Parliaments and Parliament men; then we agreed that M. de Maupeou should see me again, accompanied by the Duc d'Aiguillon, who should have the credit of presenting him, and he left me with as much mystery as he had entered.

When the King came to see me I said to him, "I have made acquaintance with your Chancellor; he is a very amiable man, and I hope that he will not conduct himself improperly towards me."

"Where did you see him?"

"Here, Sire, and but a short time since."

"He came, then, to visit you?"

"Yes, in person, that he might obtain the favour of being admitted to pay his court to me."

"Really, what you tell me seems perfectly unaccountable. He has then burst from the hands of the Choiseuls? It is amusing. Poor Choiseul when soliciting for Maupeou must have most tremendously deceived himself."

"At least, Sire, you must own that he has given you no fool."

"True. The Chancellor is a man full of talents, and I do not doubt but that he will restore to my Crown that power which circumstances have deprived it of. However, f you see him familiarly, advise him not to persuade me to extreme measures. I wish all should work for the best, without violent courses and without painful struggles."

These last words proved to me the natural timidity of the King.

"I knew very well," added the King, "that Maupeou would not prove a man for the Choiseuls. The main point is that he should be mine, and I am content."

Louis XV. was then satisfied with the Chancellor, but he was not equally so with the Comte Jean.

"I do not like," said he to me, "your —— of a monkey. He is a treacherous fellow, who has betrayed his party, and I hope some of these mornings we shall hear that the devil has wrung his neck."

So it is that "On ne peut contenter tout le monde." Who says so, I do not know.

CHAPTER XVI

The King of Denmark—The courtesans of Paris—The Duc de Choiseul and the Bishop of Orleans—Witty repartees of the King of Denmark —His visit to Madame du Barri—*The Court of King Petaud*: a satire—Letter of the Duc d'Aiguillon to Voltaire—The Duchesse de Grammont mystified—Unpublished letter of Voltaire's.

FROM this moment, and in spite of all that Comte Jean could say against it, a new counsellor was admitted to my confidence. He was the Chancellor. The Duke d'Aiguillon and he were on very good terms, and these two, with the Abbé Terray, of whom I shall speak to you presently, formed a triumvirate, which governed France from the disgrace of M. de Choiseul to the death of the King. But before I enter upon a detail of those politics, of which you will find that I understood something, allow me to continue the history of my presentation, and also to give some account of Christian VII.

You know that His Danish Majesty was expected with anything but pleasure by the King of France, and with curiosity by the rest of the nation. Men and women were impatient to see a King, under twenty years of age, who was traversing Europe with a design of gaining instruction. Married to a lovely woman, Caroline Mathilde, he had left her on the instant, without suspecting that this separation would prove fatal to both. At Paris the real character of this Prince was not known, but a confused report of his gallantry was spread abroad, upon which all the courtesans of note in the city began to try all arts to please him, each hoping to attract him to herself and dip into his strong box. M. de Sartines amused us (the King and myself) one evening by telling us the plans of these ladies. Some were

going to meet His Danish Majesty, others were to await him at the barrier, and two of the most renowned, Mesdemoiselles Gradi and Laprairie, had their portraits painted to send to the young monarch as soon as he should arrive.

Christian VII. entered Paris the latter end of the month of October, 1768. MM. de Duras complimented him in the King's name, and informed him that they were charged with the office of receiving his commands during his residence in Paris. The interview of the King and the illustrious stranger took place at Versailles. Christian VII. came thither in the State carriage, and was conducted by the Duc de Duras into the apartment of the Dauphin, where he remained until Louis XV. was prepared to receive him. I had heard much discussion about this reception. It was said that, to make a distinction between the Sovereign of a petty State and that of the superb kingdom of France, it was requisite that the former should await for some time the audience which the latter accorded. I am sure that when the peace with Frederick was under consideration the face of Louis XV. was not more grave and serious than during this puerile debate about etiquette.

The Duc de Choiseul, who had the control of foreign affairs, was in the apartment to receive His Danish Majesty, with his colleagues, the Duc de Praslin, the Comte de Saint-Florentin (whom I have called by anticipation the Duc de la Vrillière), M. Bertin, M. Mainon d'Invau, Controller of the Finances, and M. de Jarente, Bishop of Orleans and one of the Ministry. The last mentioned kept himself somewhat in the background, as though from humility. The Duc de Choiseul came up to him ånd said, with a smile:

"Monseigneur, what brings you in contact with a heretic?"

"To watch for the moment of penitence."

"But what will you do if it become necessary to teach him his *credo?*"

M. Jarente understood the joke, and was the first to jest upon his own unepiscopal conduct, replying to the Duc de Choiseul:

"There is a person present who knows it; he will whisper it to me, and, if necessary, the *Veni Creator* also."

The King of Denmark was congratulated by the Duc de Choiseul, who discharged this duty with as much grace as wit. Afterwards M. Desgranges, master of the ceremonies, having announced that Louis XV. was visible, the King of Denmark, preceded by his gentlemen and the French ministers and lords, went to the King's cabinet, in which two arm-chairs precisely alike were prepared, but His Majesty of Denmark positively refused to be seated. He entered into conversation, and felicitated himself on seeing a monarch whose renown filled Europe, and whom he should take as his model. During this conversation Christian VII. displayed the greatest amiability. Our King, speaking to him, said, "I am old enough to be your father"; to which he replied, "All my conduct towards you shall be that of a son." This was thought admirable; and at the termination of the interview Louis XV. appeared charmed with his brother of Denmark. "He is a complete Frenchman," said he to me, "and I should be sorry if he left me dissatisfied."

That same evening Christian VII. visited Monseigneur the Dauphin, in whom he did not find the urbanity of his grandfather. The conversation was short and abridged, out of regard to our Prince, who only stammered, without being able to find one polished phrase. Never was there, in his youth, a more timid and awkwardly conducted Prince than the present King. I shall mention him and his brothers hereafter, but will now direct my immediate attention to the King of Denmark. He supped the same evening with Louis XV. at a table with four-and-twenty ladies of the Court, selected from amongst those most celebrated for the charms of their persons or their wit. As His Danish Majesty was greatly struck with Madame de Flavacourt, the King asked him how old, in his opinion, the lady might be.

"Thirty, perhaps," was the reply.

"Thirty! brother. She is fifty."

"Then age has no influence at your Court."

I shall not copy the *Gazette de France* to tell you of the

sojourn of Christian VII. at Paris. I am not writing the journal of this Prince, but of myself. The King one day said to me:

"My brother of Denmark has expressed to the Duc de Duras a great desire to pay his respects to you, if you will accede to his wishes. I leave you entirely sovereign mistress of yourself, not without some fear, however, that the young King will steal away your heart from me."

"Ah! Sire," I replied, "that is an unjust suspicion. I should be angry about it if it were not a joke, and would refuse to see the King of Denmark did I not know how fully assured you are of my attachment to you."

"I should not be so jealous, madam, if I did not set so much value on it," was the reply of the King, as he kissed my hand.

The Duc de Duras came the next day to inform me of the request of his new King. It was agreed, in order to keep the interview secret, that I should receive him at my own mansion in the Rue de la Jussienne, and that he should come there without suite, and with the strictest *incognito*. At the day and hour agreed he entered my house, escorting two strangers of admirable presence. One was the King of Denmark, under the name of Comte de ——, and the other a nobleman of his suite. Christian VII. appeared to me a very handsome man. He had large and singularly expressive eyes; too much so, perhaps, for their brilliancy was not of good augury; and I was not surprised at hearing subsequently that his reason had abandoned him, although he possessed and exerted his wit most perfectly during our conversation, in which he displayed the greatest gallantry. I could not reproach him with one single expression that was objectionable, although the subject of conversation was delicate. He discoursed of the feelings of the King towards me, and yet said not a word that was unsuited or out of place, nothing but what was in the best taste, and expressed with the utmost delicacy. I asked him if the ladies of Denmark were handsome. "I thought, madam," was his reply, "until now, that the ladies of my kingdom were the loveliest in Europe."

We did not talk of myself only. Christian VII. spoke of Paris with enthusiasm. "It is the capital of the world," he remarked, "and our States are mere provinces." He sought out our most celebrated savants and literati, and was particularly delighted with D'Alembert, Diderot, La Harpe and the Comte de Buffon. He greatly regretted that Voltaire was not in Paris, and expressed his great desire to see at Ferney the great genius (as he termed him) who instructed and amused the world. He appeared weary of the fêtes which were given, and especially with the deadly-lively company of the MM. Duras. It was enough to kill you to have only one of them, and you may imagine the torture of being bored with both. The Duke had promised Louis XV. to be as amusing as possible, too! After a conversation of three hours, which His Majesty (of course) said had appeared but a moment, he left me delighted with his person, wit and manners.

When Louis XV. saw me, he enquired my opinion of His Danish Majesty.

"He is," I replied, "a well-educated King, and that, they say, is a rarity."

"True," said Louis XV. "There are so many persons who are interested in our ignorance that it is miracle if we escape out of their hands as reasonable beings."

I went on to tell the King our conversation. "Ah!" cried he, "here is one who will increase the vanity of the literary tribe: they want it, certainly. All these wits are our natural born enemies; they think themselves above us, and the more we honour them the greater right do they assume to censure and despise us."

This was the usual burden of his song. He hated men of learning. Voltaire especially was his detestation, on account of the numerous epigrams which this great man had written against him; and Voltaire had just given fresh subject of offence by publishing "La Cour du Roi Petaud" (the Court of the King Petaud), a satire evidently directed as strongly against the King as your humble servant. M. de Voltaire had doubtless been encouraged to write this libel by the Choiseul party. He was at a distance, judged

unfavourably of me, and thought he could scourge me without compromising himself.

It was Comte Jean who brought me these verses, in which there was less poetry than malevolence. I read them, was indignant, and wept. The Duc d'Aiguillon came, and, finding me in tears, enquired the cause.

"Here," said I, giving him the poem, "see if you can bear so gross an insult." He took the paper, cast his eyes over it, and having folded it up, put it into his pocket.

"It was foolish," said he, "to show this to you. I knew of it yesterday, and came now to talk with you of it."

"I rely on you to do me justice."

"*Miséricorde!*" cried the Duke, "would you lose yourself in the eyes of all France? You would place yourself in a fine situation by declaring yourself the persecutrix of Voltaire. Only an enemy could have thus advised you."

"That enemy was Comte Jean."

"Then your imprudence equals your zeal. Do you not perceive the advantage it would give your adversaries were we to act in this manner? To the hatred of the Court would be united that of the literati, women and young persons. Voltaire is a god who is not to be smitten without sacrilege."

"Must I then tamely submit to be beaten?"

"Yes, for the moment; but it will not last long. I have just written this letter to M. de Voltaire that peace may be made between you:

"'Sir,—The superiority of your genius places you amongst the number of the potentates of Europe. Everyone desires not only to be at peace with you, but even, if it be possible, to obtain your esteem. I flatter myself with being included in the ranks of your admirers; my uncle has spoken to you many times of my attachment to your person, and I embrace the opportunity of proving this by a means that now presents itself.

"'Persons in whom you place too much confidence have spread abroad, under your name, copies of a poem entitled "La Cour du Roi Petaud." In this, wherein insult is cast on a personage who should be exempt from all such offence, is also outraged, in a most indecent way, a lovely female, whom you would adore as we do if you had the happiness to know her. And you, sir, have caused her much affliction. Is it for the poet of the lover of Gabrielle to carry desolation into the kingdom of the Graces?

"'Your correspondents use you ill by leaving you in ignorance that this young person has immense favour here; that we are all at her feet; that she is all powerful, and that her anger is to be particularly avoided. She is the more to be propitiated, as yesterday, in the presence of a certain person whom your verses had greatly irritated, she took up your defence with as much grace as generosity. You see, sir, that you ought not to be on bad terms with her.

"'My uncle allows me to see, as one of the initiated, what you call your scraps, which are delicious feasts to us. I read them to the lady in question, who takes great delight in reciting, or hearing others recite, your verses, and she begs you will send her some as a proof of your repentance. Under these circumstances, if your bellicose disposition urges you on to war, we hope, before you continue it, that you will loyally and frankly declare it.

"'In conclusion, be assured that I shall defend you to my utmost, and am for life, Yours, &c.'"

Whilst we were awaiting Voltaire's reply, I determined to avenge myself on the Duchesse de Grammont, who had encouraged him in his attack; and thus did I serve this lady. Persuaded that she did not know the writing of His Danish Majesty, I wrote the following letter to her:

"MADAME LA DUCHESSE,—I have struggled to this time to avoid confessing to you how I am subdued. Happy should I be could I throw myself at your feet. My rank alone must excuse my boldness. Nothing would equal my joy if this evening, at the theatre at Madame de Villeroi's, you would appear with blue feathers in your head-dress. I do not add my name; it is one of those which should not be found at the bottom of a declaration of love."

In spite of all her penetration, the Duchesse de Grammont did not perceive, in the emphatic tone of this letter, that it was a trick. Her self-love made her believe that a woman of more than forty could be pleasing to a King not yet twenty. She actually went in the evening to Madame de Villeroi's dressed in blue, with a blue plumed headdress. She was placed next to His Danish Majesty. Christian VII. addressed her in most courteous terms; but not one word of love. The Duchess, imagining that the Prince was timid, looked at him with eyes of tenderness, and endeavoured to attract and encourage him by all the means she could devise; but the monarch did not understand her. The Duchess then addressed a few words which she hoped would lead to an explanation, but, to her dismay, His Majesty did not appear to understand her. Madame de

Grammont was furious at this affair. The Duc d'Aiguillon, who was close to her, had seen all, heard all, and related the particulars to me. The same day I told the King of my trick and its success. He laughed excessively, and then scolded me for at all compromising His Danish Majesty.

"How, Sire?" was my reply. "I did not sign his name; I have not forged his signature. The vanity of the Duchess has alone caused all the ridiculous portion of this joke. So much the worse for her if she did not succeed."

I did not, however, limit my revenge to this. A second letter, in the same hand, was addressed to my luckless enemy. This time she was informed that she had been made a butt of, and mystified. I learnt from M. de Sartines, who, after our compact, gave me details of all the methods she had pursued to detect the author of these two epistles, and put a termination to all these enquiries by denouncing myself to M. de Sartines, who then gave such a turn to the whole matter that the Duchess could never arrive at the truth.

Voltaire, in the meantime, was not slow in replying; and as I imagine that you will not be sorry to read his letter, I transcribe it for you:

"MONSIEUR LE DUC,—I am a lost, destroyed man. If I had strength enough to fly, I do not know where I should find courage to take refuge. I! Good God! I am suspected of having attacked that which, in common with all France, I respect! When there only remains to me the smallest power of utterance, just enough to chant a *De profundis*, that I should employ it in howling at the most lovely and amiable of females! Believe me, Monsieur le Duc, that it is not at the moment when he is about to render up his soul that a man of any good feeling would outrage the divinity whom he adores.

"No, I am not the author of the 'Cour du Roi Petaud.' The verses of this rhapsody are not worth much, it is true; but, indeed, they are not mine. They are too miserable, and of too bad a style. All the vile trash spread abroad in my name, all those pamphlets without talent, make me lose my senses, and now I have scarcely enough left to defend myself with. It is on you, Monsieur le Duc, that I rely; do not refuse to be the advocate of an unfortunate man unjustly accused. Condescend to say to this young lady that I have been before embroiled with Madame de Pompadour, for whom I professed the highest esteem; tell her that, at the present day especially, the favourite of Cæsar is sacred for me; that my heart and pen are hers, and that I only aspire to live and die under her banner.

"As to the scraps you ask for, I have not at this moment any suitable.

Only the best viands are served up at the table of the goddesses. If I had any I would present them to the person of whom you speak to me. Assure her that one day the greatest merit of my verses will be to have them recited by her lips; and entreat her, until she bestows immortality on me, to permit me to prostrate myself at her beautiful feet.

"I will not conclude my letter, Monsieur le Duc, without thanking you a thousand times for the advice you have given me. This proof of your kindness will, if possible, augment the sincere attachment I bear to you. I salute you with profound respect."

As it is bold to hold the pen after having transcribed anything of M. de Voltaire's, I leave off here for to-day.

CHAPTER XVII

When is the presentation to take place?—Conversation on this subject with the King—M. de Maupeou and M. de la Vauguyon—Conversation on the same subject with the King and the Duc de Richelieu—M. de la Vrillière—M. Bertin—Louis XV. and the Comtesse—The King's promise—The fireworks: an anecdote—The Marquise de Castellane—M. de Maupeou at the Duc de Choiseul's—The Duchesse de Grammont.

In spite of the love of the Duchesse de Grammont, the King of Denmark departed at last. Louis XV. having resumed his former habits, I began to meditate seriously on my presentation; and my friends employed themselves to the utmost in furthering my desires and ensuring my triumph.

The Chancellor, who each day became more attached to my interests, opened the campaign. One day, when the King was in a rage with the Parliaments, the Chancellor seized the opportunity to tell him that the cabal who opposed my presentation maintained so much resistance under the idea and in the hope that they would be supported by the Parliament of Paris.

"If Your Majesty," added the Chancellor, "had less condescension towards these malcontents they would fear your authority more."

"You will see," replied the King, "that it will be their audacity which will urge me on to a step which otherwise I should wish to avoid."

Whilst the hatred which M. de Maupeou bore towards the Parliaments served me in this way, the love of M. de la Vauguyon for the Jesuits turned to even more advantage. The good Duke incessantly talked to me of his dear Jesuits;

[redacted]

and I as constantly replied that my influence would not be salutary until after my presentation. M. de la Vauguyon had sense enough to perceive the embarrassment of my situation, and saw that before I could think of others I must think of myself. Having taken "sweet counsel" with the powerful heads of his company, he freely gave me all his influence with the King.

Fortune sent me an auxiliary not less influential than these two gentlemen; I mean the Maréchal Duc de Richelieu. In the month of January, 1769, he returned from his government of Guienne to enter on service. He had much credit with the King, and this (would you believe it?) resulted from his reputation as a man of intrigue. He told the King everything that came into his head. He told him one day that the Choiseuls boasted that he, the King of France, never dared introduce his mistress into the State apartments at Versailles.

"Yes," added the Duke, "they boast so loudly that nothing else is talked of in the province; and at Bordeaux, for instance, there is one merchant who, on the strength of the enemies of the Countess, has made a bet that she will never be presented."

"And why do you not imprison these persons?" enquired the King, angrily.

"Because, Sire, it appears to me unjust to punish the echo of the fooleries of Paris."

"I will conduct myself as regards the presentation of Madame du Barri in the manner which I think best. But is it not an inconceivable contrariety that one party should wish it with the utmost desire and another place every obstacle in the way? In truth, I am very unfortunate, and a cruel tyranny is exercised over me."

The Duc de Richelieu, not wishing to appear as one of the tyrants of the King, gave a different turn to the conversation.

My presentation was, however, a matter of supreme importance to me and mine. I needed partisans, and the Duc de la Vrillière was gained over to my side by making him believe that the King would yield to my desires, and that then I should remember all those who opposed my elevation.

The Duc d'Aiguillon also drew over to my party M. Bertin, who bore no love to the Choiseuls, and who saw that the preponderance of interest was on my side of the scale. When I was assured of a considerable number of defenders, I thought I might venture on the master-stroke, and thus I went to work.

One evening the King was with me, and MM. de Maupeou and de Richelieu were there also. We were discoursing of different things, and the King was perfectly tranquillised, little anticipating the scene that was in store for him. I rose suddenly from my arm-chair, and going up to His Majesty, after a profound curtsey, cast myself at his feet. Louis XV. would have raised me, but I said:

"No, I will remain where I am until you have accorded me the favour I ask."

"If you remain in this posture I shall place myself in a similar one."

"Well, then, since you will not have me at your knees I will place myself on them"; and I seated myself in his lap without ceremony.

"Listen to me, Sire," I said, "and repeat what I say to the King of France word for word. He must authorise my presentation; for else, on some fine day, in the presence of the whole Court, I will go to the State apartments and try whether I shall be repulsed at the door."

"Will she have the boldness?" enquired the King of the Chancellor.

"I have no doubt of it, Sire. A woman, young, beautiful, honoured with your kindness, may venture to do anything."

"Is it not distressing to me," I added, "that, graced with Your Majesty's favours, I remain thus concealed, whilst women whom you detest annoy you with their presence and weary you with state and pomp?"

"Madam is right," replied the Duc de Richelieu, "and I see that you look for her every evening where she is not, and where she ought to be."

"What! you too, Duc de Richelieu! do you join in the cry of the Chancellor?"

"I would tear out the eyes of these gentlemen," I added, "if they thought differently from me."

"Oh!" said the King, laughing, "this punishment would not be unsuited to M. Maupeou: Justice ought to be blind. As for you, M. de Richelieu, you have your *bâton* left."

"Which he has nobly gained," I replied, "by fighting against Your Majesty's enemies, and of which he still continues worthy by now defending me from my foes."

"This rebellion," said the King, "cannot last, and I see myself compelled to hold a *lit de justice*."[1]

"And I swear to you that I will receive nobody into mine until I have been presented."

This sally amused the King, who said, "Well, since it must be so, you shall be presented."

At this I threw my arms round the King's neck, giving a cry of joy which might have been heard by my rivals. After that, I advanced to the two gentlemen who had advocated my cause so well, extending a hand to each, which they took and kissed with great gallantry.

Louis XV. became thoughtful, and continued to murmur between his teeth, "I wash my hands of it—they will cry out—they will clamour—but it must be so." I saw the feelings of the King, and took care not to allow him to go away in this state. Whilst I sought to compose him by my caresses, the Duc de Richelieu told us one of his thousand-and-one adventures which he told so well. I know not if it will please you, but such as it is I shall give you an abridgment of it.

"I was, you know," he began, "a very good-looking and very wild fellow. Women have no objection to this. I was travelling, and in my way through M——, the intendant of the city insisted on my taking up my abode at his house. His lady added her entreaties, and I consented. I must tell you that the lady was handsome. I had passed the night with her, when, on the next morning, as I sought to go out of her apartment, I found the outer door double locked and

---

1 A judicial sitting or bed.

bolted. I looked round me on all sides, but found no egress. Whilst I was lamenting this with the lady's *femme de chambre*, who was nearly as much distressed as her mistress, I saw in a detached closet a great many machines covered with paper, and all of different shapes. On enquiry, I was informed that the following Monday was the lady's birthday, which they were to celebrate with fireworks. I looked at the beautiful fusees and brilliant suns with much admiration. Suddenly, thinking of the lady's honour, which might be compromised, I took a light and set fire to a Roman candle; in a moment the whole was in flames, and everybody took alarm. Great was the consternation in the house, which was turned out of windows; and in the uproar, the house-door being broken open, a crowd of persons rushed in. I ran this way and that way; everybody admired and praised my exertions. I was compelled to quit the house at last, and ordered my carriage, whilst M. l'Intendant was thanking me for the vast service I had rendered him. I assure you, Sire, that I never laughed more heartily."

This tale amused the King, and the Duc de Richelieu assured him that he had never told it before. A thousand considerations had induced him to keep it to himself until the present time. "But now," said he, "the third generation of Madame l'Intendante is no longer young, and I have no fear of being called out to fight a duel."[1]

Next day there was a general rumour of my presentation. My friends asserted that I had the King's promise. This was imprudent on their part, and they injured my interest whilst they flattered my vanity. They put the Choiseul cabal to work, who intrigued so well that not a person could be found who would perform the office of introductress. You know the

1 The Duc de Richelieu preserved his coolness and talent at repartee in the most trivial circumstances. The story is well known of the man who came to ask for his aid, saying they were related. "How?" asked the Duke. "Sir, by Adam." "Give this man a penny," said the Duke, turning to a gentleman of his train; "and if all his relations give him as much he will be a richer man than I am." If our readers will turn to their "Joe Miller," they will find this jest attributed to the witty Duke of Buckingham. It is a very good joke for a Duke, but savours more of a desire to be witty than to be charitable.—Trans.

[redacted]

custom: the presentation is effected by the intermediacy of another lady, who conducts the person to be presented to the Princesses, and introduces her. This custom had passed into a law, and it would have been too humiliating to me to have dispensed with it.

This was a dire blow for me: it distressed me sadly, and I wept over it with my friends. The Duc de Richelieu said to me:

"With money and promises everything can be managed at Court. There is no place where they know better how to value complaisance, and the price at which it is sold. Do not give yourself any uneasiness; we shall find the lady we want."

And we did find her, but her compliance was dearly bought. Two ladies who were applied to stipulated for most outrageous conditions. One, the Marquise de Castellane, consented to present me, but demanded that she should be created a duchess, and have a gift of 500,000 livres; the other, whose name I forget, asked for her husband the Order of the Holy Ghost and a government, a regiment for her son, and for herself I forget what. These ladies seemed to think, like Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, that governments and 500,000 livres were to be picked up on the highway. In truth, they spoke out unmistakably.

At this juncture the Chancellor had a singular conversation concerning me with the Choiseuls. He had been one morning to call on the Duke, and whilst they were discoursing, the Duchesse de Grammont came into her brother's apartment and entered at once into conversation.

"Ah! my lord, I am glad to see you. Your new friends carry you off from your old ones. You are wrong to adore the rising sun."

"That was the idolatry of a great number of persons. But I beg of you to be so very kind as not to speak to me in metaphors if you would wish me to understand you."

"Oh! you begin to be ignorant. You know as well as I do what I mean—and your daily visits to this *fille*."

"Which, madam? There are so many at Court!"

This sarcastic reply made the brother and sister smile, both of them being fully competent to understand the merit of an epigram. The Duke fearing lest the Duchess should go too far, judging by what she had already said, thus addressed him:

"You are, then, one of the adorers of the Comtesse du Barri?"

"Yes, M. le Duc; and would to God that, for your own interest, you would be so too!"

"My brother set foot in the house of this creature!"

"Why not, madam? We see good company there: the Prince de Soubise, the Ducs de la Trémouille, de la Vauguyon, de Duras, de Richelieu, d'Aiguillon, and many others, not to mention the King of France. A gentleman may be seen in such society without any disgrace."

"M. le Chevalier," replied the Duke, "to speak candidly to you, allow me to ask if anyone who would have the friendship of our house would be seen in that of the lady in question?"

"Pardon me, Duke; that is not the question. Allow me, in my turn, to ask you why those of your house should not go there? This, I think, is the real question."

"You offer us a splendid alliance!" said the Duchess with anger.

"I offer nothing, madam; I only enquire. For my part, I see no legitimate motive for this proscription of Madame du Barri."

"A woman without character!"

"Character! Why, madam, who has any in these days? M. de Crébillon the younger would be at a loss to tell us where to find it."

This reply made the Duke and his sister smile again. The Chancellor went on thus:

"It appears to me that persons were less difficult in the times of Madame de Pompadour."

"But a creature who has been so low in society!"

"Have you seen her so, madam? And supposing it has been the case, do we interdict all ladies of conduct not less

blamable from an introduction at Court. How many can you enumerate, madam, who have led a life much more scandalous? Let us count upon our fingers. First, the Maréchale de Luxembourg—one; then——"

"Then the Comtesse de Choiseul, my sister-in-law," added the Duke; "we know it as well as you, sir. But this is not the matter in question. You are not ignorant that our enemies surround this Madame du Barri; and it is of your alliance with them that I complain."

"You see everything with a jaundiced eye, M. le Duc. But if you fear the influence of this lady with the King, why do you not present yourself at her apartments? She would be delighted to receive you."

"No, no!" cried the Duchess, "my brother will never present himself to such a creature. If he would degrade himself so low I would never forgive him as long as I lived. Since you show your gratitude for what has been done for you by leaguing yourself with this woman, tell her from me that I detest her, and that I will never rest until I have sent her back again to her dunghill."

"Madam," replied the Chancellor, "I will evince my gratitude to the Duke by not delivering such a message"; and the Chancellor went out.

M. de Maupeou came to tell me the whole of this conversation, which Chon wrote down under his dictation that I might show it to the King. You will see in my next letter what resulted from all this, and how the ill-timed enmity of the Choiseuls served my interests most materially.

CHAPTER XVIII

A word concerning the Duchesse de Choiseul—The apartment of the Comte de Noailles—The Noailles—Intrigues for the presentation—The Comtesse de Bearn—M. Morand once more—Visit of the Comtesse de Bearn to the Comtesse du Barri—Conversation—Interested complaisance—The King and the Comtesse du Barri—Dispute and reconciliation.

I SHOWED the King this conversation in which I had been so shamefully vilified by the Duchesse de Grammont. Louis XV. was very much inclined to testify his disapprobation to this lady, but was withheld by the consideration he felt for the Duc and (particularly) the Duchesse de Choiseul. This latter lady was not beloved by her husband, but her noble qualities, her good heart, made her an object of adoration to the whole Court. You could not speak to any person of Madame de Choiseul without hearing a eulogium in reply. The King himself was full of respect towards her; so much so that, on the disgrace of the Duke, he in some sort of way asked her pardon for the chagrin which he had caused her. Good conduct is no claim to advancement at Court, but it procures the esteem of the courtiers. Remember, my friend, that moral maxim. There is not one of greater truth in my whole journal.

The King, unable to interpose his authority in a woman's quarrel, was yet determined on giving a striking proof of the attachment he bore to me. I had up to this time occupied Lebel's apartments in the Château. It was not befitting my station, and the King thought he would give me those of Madame de Pompadour, to which I had some claim. This apartment was now occupied by the Comte de Noailles,

governor of the Château, who, as great a fool as the rest of his family, began to exclaim most lustily when the King's will was communicated to him. He came to His Majesty complaining and lamenting. The King listened very quietly to his list of grievances; and when he had moaned and groaned out his dolorous tale, His Majesty said to him:

"My dear Count, who built the Château of Versailles?"

"Why, Sire, your illustrious great-grandfather."

"Well, then, as I am at home, I mean to be master. You may establish the seat of your government where you will; but in two hours the place must be free. I am in earnest."

The Comte de Noailles departed much disconcerted, took away his furniture, and the same evening I installed myself in the apartments. You must think that this was a fresh cause of chagrin and created me more enemies. There are certain families who look upon the Court as their hereditary domain: the Noailles family was one of them. However, there is no ground for pretension to such a right. Their family took its rise from a certain Adhemar de Noailles, *capitoul* of Toulouse, ennobled, according to all appearance, by the exercise of his charge in 1459. The grandfather of these Noailles was a domestic of M. de Turenne's, and his family was patronised at Court by Madame de Maintenon. Everybody knows this. But to return to my presentation.

M. de Maupeou, whose good services I can never sufficiently vaunt, came to me one day and said, "I think that I have found a lady *présenteuse*. I have a dame of quality who will do what we want."

"Who is it?" said I, with joy.

"A Comtesse d'Escarbagnas, a litigious lady, with much ambition and avarice. You must see her, talk with her, and understand each other."

"But where can we see her?"

"That is easy enough. She claims from the House of Saluces a property of three hundred thousand livres; she is very greedy for money. Send someone to her who will whisper in her ear that I see you often, and that your

protection can serve her greatly in her lawsuit; she will come to you post-haste."

I approved the counsel of the Chancellor; and, in concert with Comte Jean, I once again made use of the ministry of the good M. Morand, whom I had recompensed largely for his good and loyal services. This was, however, the last he ever rendered me; for some months after my presentation I learnt that he had died of indigestion—a death worthy of such a life and such a man.

M. Morand, after having found out the attorney of Madame la Comtesse de Bearn, went to him under some pretext, and then boasted of my vast influence with the Chancellor. The lawyer, to whom Madame de Bearn was to pay a visit on that very day, did not fail to repeat what M. Morand had told him. The next day the Countess, like a true litigant, called upon him; she related her affair to him, and begged him to use his interest with me.

"I would do it with pleasure," said the worthy, "if I did not think it better that you should see the Comtesse du Barri yourself. I can assure you that she will be delighted to aid you."

Madame de Bearn then came to me with M. Morand. Gracious heavens! how simple we were to take so much pains with this lady. Had we known her better we should not have been so long in coming to the point. Scarcely anything was said at this first visit; I contented myself with assuring her of my goodwill. On the same day the Vicomte Adolphe du Barri told his father that the young De Bearn had asked him the evening before if I had found a *stepmother* to present me; that, in case I had not, his mother would not refuse such a service, should it be desired by the King. Comte Jean and I perfectly understood the lady. She came again, and I renewed the expression of my desire to be useful to her. She replied, in the hackneyed phrase, that she should be charmed to prove her gratitude to me. I took her at her word.

"Madam," said I to her, "you cannot be ignorant that I ardently desire to be presented. My husband has sent in his

[redacted]

proofs of nobility, which have been received; I now only want a *marraine*.[1] If you will officiate in that capacity I shall owe you a debt of gratitude all my life."

"Madam, I am at the King's orders."

"But, madam, the King has nothing to do with this. I wish to be presented; will you introduce me?"

"Madam, the first wish of my heart is to be agreeable to you. I only desire that the King will in some way, no matter how trifling, testify his will on this point."

"Well, then," I exclaimed with impatience, "I see you will not give me a direct reply. Why should you wish the King to interfere in what does not concern him? Is it your intention to oblige me; yes or no?"

"Yes, madam, certainly; but you must be aware of the tremendous cabal which is raised against you. Can I contend against it alone? and who will sustain me through it?"

"I will to the full extent of my power as long as I am here, and the King will always do so. I can assure you that he will be grateful for your exertions in my behalf."

"I should like to have half a line from His Majesty as a protection and assurance."

"And that you will not get. The King's signature must not be compromised in this affair, and I do not think I ought to ask for it. Let us, therefore, madam, cease this discourse, since you ask such terms for your complaisance."

The Comtesse de Bearn rose; I did the same; and we parted mutually dissatisfied with each other.

My friends, my brother-in-law and his sisters, impatiently awaited the result of my conversation with Madame de Bearn. I told them all that had passed, giving my opinion of this lady as I thought her—a malicious, provoking creature.

"How soon you torment yourself," said the Chancellor to me. "Do you not see that this woman wants a price to be bidden for her? She is yours, body and soul; but first of all she must be paid."

---

1 Godmother.

"Let that be no obstacle," said Comte Jean; "we will give her money, but present us she must."

On this it was decided that on the following morning my brother-in-law should go to Paris to find M. Morand, and get him to undertake the arrangement.

The next day my brother-in-law went to M. Morand's, and when he had disclosed his message concerning the Countess the good Morand began to laugh. He told the Count that the previous evening this lady had sent for him; and on going to her house, Madame de Bearn, as a set-off against the inconveniences which might result to her from being the instrument of my presentation, had stipulated for certain compensations; such, for instance, as a sum of 200,000 livres, a written promise of a regiment for her son, and for herself an appointment in the establishment of the future Dauphiness. This was the point aimed at by all the ambitious courtiers. Comte Jean thought these conditions preposterous. He had a *carte blanche* from me, and desired M. Morand to offer the lady 100,000 livres, and to add an assurance that the King should be importuned to place young De Bearn advantageously, and herself in the position requested. Thereupon my brother-in-law returned to Versailles.

The Comte Jean had scarcely returned an hour when we received a letter from M. Morand stating that he had gone, in consequence of the instructions of Comte Jean, to the Comtesse de Bearn; that he had found the lady pliant enough on the first point and disposed to content herself with the half of the sum originally demanded; that on point the second, I mean the appointments of herself and son, she would come to no compromise, but stuck hard and fast to the written promise of the King; and that he (Morand) thought this an obstacle not to be overcome unless we subscribed to her wishes. This letter put me in an excessively ill-humour. I saw my presentation deferred till doomsday, or, at least, adjourned *sine die*. I questioned my friends: the unanimous advice was that I ought to mention it to the King at one of his evening visits, and I determined to do so without loss of time.

When His Majesty came I received him very graciously, and then said to him:

"Congratulate me, Sire; I have found my godmother."

"Ah! so much the better." (I know that at the bottom of his heart he said, "So much the *worse*.")

"And who," asked the King, with impatience, "may the lady be?"

"Madame de Bearn, a lady of quality in her own right, and of high nobility on her husband's side."

"Yes, he was a *garde du corps*, and the son has just left the pages. Ah! she will present you, then. That's well; I shall feel favoured by her."

"Would it not be best, Sire, to tell her so yourself?"

"Yes, yes, certainly; but after the ceremony."

"And why not previously?"

"Why? because I do not wish to appear to have forced your presentation."

"Well, then," I replied, striking the floor with my foot, "you will not do for me what you would do for a woman who is a complete stranger to you. Many thanks for your excessive kindness."

"Well, well, do not scold. Anger does not become you."

"No more than this indifference suits you; it is cruel. If you recede from saying a word, what will you do when I tell you of the conditions of Madame de Bearn?"

"What does the good Countess ask for?"

"Things past conception."

"What?"

"She has stipulations unlimited."

"But what are they, then?"

"A hundred thousand livres for herself."

"What! only that? We will grant so much.

"Then a regiment for her son."

"Oh, he is the wood they make colonels of, and if he behave well——"

"But then she wishes to be annexed in some station or other to the household of the future Dauphiness!"

"Oh, that is impossible! All the selections have been

made; but we will make an equivalent by placing one of her family about the person of one of the Princes, my grandson. Is this all?"

"Yes, Sire, that is all, with one small formality excepted. This lady, who is one of much punctilio, only considers *written* engagements as binding. She wishes for one word in Your Majesty's handwriting——"

"A most impertinent woman!" cried the King, walking with rapid strides up and down my room. "She has dared not to believe me on my word! Writing!—a signature! She mistrusts me as she would the lowest scribbler of France. A writing!—my signature! My predecessor, Louis XIV., repented having given his to Charost. I will not commit a similar error."

"But, Sire, when a Prince has a real desire to keep his word, it is of little import whether he gives it in writing."

At these words Louis XV. frowned sternly, but, as he had the best sense in the world, he saw that he was wrong; and having no reply to make, he determined to flee away. I ran after him, and caught him by the arm, when he said, with assumed anger, which did not deceive me:

"Leave me, madam, you have offended my honour."

"Well, then, M. Lafrance," replied I, assuming also a scolding tone, "I will give you satisfaction. Choose your time, weapons and place; I will meet you, and we shall see whether you have courage to kill a woman who lives for you only, and whom you render the most miserable creature in existence."

Louis XV. gave me a kiss, and laughingly said, "I ought to make you sleep in the Bastille to-night."

"I am, then, more merciful than you, for I think I shall make you sleep in the couch you love best."

This reply amused the King excessively, and he himself proposed to send for Madame de Bearn. I should speak of my presentation before him, and then, without making any positive concession, he would see what could be done to satisfy her.

For want of any other, I accepted this *mezzo termine*.

[redacted]

CHAPTER XIX

The Comtesse de Bearn—The supper—Louis XV.—Intrigues against my presentation—M. de Roquelaure—The scalded foot—The Comtesse d'Aloigny—The Duc d'Aiguillon and Madame de Bearn—Anger of the King's daughters—Madame Adelaide and the Comtesse du Barri—Dissatisfaction of the King.

M. Morand was again put in requisition, and went from me to ask Madame de Bearn to come and sup at my apartments. We were in committee—my sisters-in-law, myself and Comte Jean. The Countess made some difficulties at first, under pretence that she was afraid to refuse me a second time. Our messenger assured her by saying that a supper would not bind her to anything, and that she should still be at liberty to give any reply she pleased. Madame de Bearn allowed herself to be persuaded, and sent me word that she would accept my invitation. She would have reflected twice before she so far committed herself had she at all suspected the turn we meant to serve her. But I saw, by the wording of her note, that she still hoped that the King would be induced to grant me the written promise which I asked for her.

She came. I received her with all possible courtesy, and yet not with much heartiness. I could not help remembering the vexatious terms she set upon her compliance. However, the supper was gay enough. Comte Jean and my sisters-in-law, who knew very well how to dissemble, did the honours in a most agreeable way. On leaving table we went into the drawing-room, and then began to discuss the serious question which had brought us together. At the first words which Comte Jean uttered, Madame de Bearn, taking my hands with a respectful familiarity, said to me:

"I hope, madam, that you will not have a bad opinion of me for adding such conditions to my desire of obliging you. The situation of my family requires it, but it is only a trifle for the King to grant."

"Much more than you imagine, madam," I replied. "The King does not care to involve himself in such engagements. He does not like, moreover, that his sacred word should be doubted."

"Ah!" replied the cunning creature, "heaven forbid that I should not blindly trust to the King's word! But his memory may fail, and he, like other men, may forget."

"Madam," replied Comte Jean, with the utmost gravity, "is a lady as full of prudence as of kindness, but yet — a little too exacting. Madam wishes to have a promise signed for herself and son; that is too much. Why does she not content herself in dividing the difficulty, by satisfying herself with a verbal promise for what concerns herself, and with a written engagement for what relates to her son?"

"Mon Dieu, monsieur," replied the Countess, "I am anxious to arrange all to our mutual satisfaction. But His Majesty would not surely refuse the entreaties of madam for what I ask."

"I will speak to him of it the first time I see him."

"Oh, you are a charming woman. You will obtain all from the King, and make a sure friend——"

"Whose friendship is very difficult to acquire," said I, interrupting her.

The Countess would have replied to this, when my first *valet de chambre*, opening the two folding-doors of the room, announced the King.

At this unexpected name my guest trembled, and in spite of the thick rouge which covered her cheeks, I perceived she turned pale. She then saw the scene we had prepared for her. She wished herself a hundred leagues off; but she could do nothing but remain where she was. I took her by the hand, all trembling as she was, and presented her to the King, saying:

"Sire, I now do for this lady, in my own drawing-room,

[redacted]

what she will have the kindness to do for me at the State reception-room."

"Ah!" replied the King, "is it Madame de Bearn that you present to me? I am indeed delighted. Her husband was one of my faithful servants. I was much pleased with her son when he was one of my pages, and I perceive that she herself is desirous of testifying to me her attachment to my person. I thank you, madam; you cannot confer a greater favour on me, and I shall embrace every opportunity of proving to you how much satisfaction your conduct affords me."

Each word that the King uttered went to the heart of the Countess. However, making a virtue of necessity, she replied that she was proud and happy at what the King had said to her, and that it would be her constant aim to please His Majesty, flattering herself that the King would remember the services of the Bearn family and would think of her in the dispensation of his bounties.

"You may rely on it, madam," replied Louis XV., "especially if the Comtesse du Barri applies to me on your behalf."

Then, turning to me, "When, then, is this redoubtable presentation to take place?"

"On the day, Sire, when Your Majesty shall think proper," I replied.

"Well, I will send the Duc de Richelieu to you, who will arrange the whole."

This settled, the subject was turned; but Madame de Bearn lost her tongue entirely. In spite of all her endeavours her forehead became contracted every moment, and I am sure she went away vexed and disappointed.

The following morning the Comte Jean and my sister-in-law went to her house. They testified their regret for what had occurred the previous evening; they assured her that we would not take any advantage of the conditionless engagement which she had made to present me, and that, although it was impossible to ask the required guarantees from the King, still we should most undeviatingly adhere

to the clauses of the treaty. They added that they came to enquire when she would choose to touch the hundred thousand livres. The Countess replied that, in spite of the real disadvantage which she must henceforward labour under in this affair, she felt great friendship for me and would not refuse to oblige me, and she flattered herself that I would espouse her cause with the King. The Comte Jean assured her of this, and settled with her the period of the payment of the hundred thousand livres, which were to be paid at sight on her drawing on M. de la Borde, the Court banker.

Thus, then, my presentation was an assured matter; nothing now could prevent it—at least, I fancied so to myself. I reckoned without my host; I did not yet know all the malice of a lady or gentleman courtier. As it was, however, M. de Choiseul and his vile sister had gained over one of my servants, for they knew all that had passed. They soon learnt that Madame de Bearn had come to supper with me, and that after supper a visit of the King had decided this lady on my presentation. This they determined to prevent.

For this end they despatched, as ambassador, the Chevalier de Coigny to the house of Madame de Bearn. He, following the instructions of the minister, sought by turns to seduce and intimidate the Countess, but all went for nothing. Madame de Bearn told the Chevalier de Coigny that she had been with me to ask my influence with the Chancellor. The Chevalier left her without being able to obtain any other information.

This bad success did not dishearten the Choiseuls. To Madame de Bearn they sent this time M. de Roquelaure, Bishop of Senlis and Grand Almoner to the King. This prelate was much liked at Court, and in high favour with Mesdames the King's daughters. We were good friends together at last, but in this particular he was very near doing me great wrong. M. de Roquelaure having called on Madame de Bearn, told her that he well knew the nature of her communications with me.

"Do not flatter yourself," said he, "that you will obtain,

through the influence of the Comtesse du Barri, all that has been promised you. You will have opposed to you the most powerful adversaries and most august personages. It cannot be concealed from you that Mesdames will contemplate the presentation of this creature with the utmost displeasure. They will not fail to obtain great influence over the future Dauphin, and will do you mischief with him; so that, whether in the actual state of things, or in that which the age and health of the King must lead us to anticipate, you will be in a most unfortunaate situation at Court."

The old Bishop, with his mischievous frankness, catechised Madame de Bearn so closely that at length she replied that, so much respect and deference did she entertain towards the Princesses, she would not present me until they should accord their permission for me to appear before them. M. de Roquelaure took this reply to the Choiseuls. Madame de Grammont, enchanted, thinking the point already gained, sent Madame de Bearn an invitation to supper the next day. But this was not the Countess's game. She was compelled to decide promptly, and she thought to preserve a strict neutrality until fresh orders should issue. What do you suppose she did? She wrote to both of us, Madame de Grammont and myself, that she had scalded her foot, and that it was impossible for her to go from home.

On receiving my note I believed myself betrayed—forsaken. Comte Jean and I suspected that this was a feint, and went with all speed to call on the Comtesse de Bearn. She received us with her usual courtesy, complained that we had arrived at the very moment of the dressing of her wound, and told us she would defer it. But I would not agree to this. My brother-in-law went into another room, and Madame de Bearn began to unswathe her foot in my presence with the utmost caution and tenderness. I awaited the evidence of her falsehood, when, to my astonishment, I saw a horrible burn! I did not for a moment doubt, what was afterwards confirmed, namely, that Madame de Bearn had actually perpetrated this, and maimed herself of her own free will. I mentally cursed her Roman courage, and

would have sent my heroic godmother to the devil with all my heart.

Thus, then, was my presentation stopped by the foot of Madame de Bearn. This mischance did not damp the zeal of my friends. On the one hand, Comte Jean, after having stirred heaven and earth, met with the Comtesse d'Aloigny. She consented to become my godmother, immediately after her own presentation, for eighty thousand livres and the expenses of the ceremony. But Mesdames received her so unsatisfactorily that my own feelings told me I ought not to be presented at Court under her auspices.

We thanked the Comtesse d'Aloigny, therefore, and sent her, as a remuneration, twenty thousand livres from the King.

Whilst the Comte Jean failed on one side, the Duc d'Aiguillon succeeded on another. He was in some way related to Madame de Bearn. He went to visit her, and made her understand that, as the Choiseuls neither gave nor promised her anything, she would be wrong in declaring for them; that, on the other hand, if she declared for me, I could procure for her the favour of the King. Madame de Bearn yielded to his persuasions, and charged the Duc d'Aiguillon to say to me, and even herself wrote, that she put herself entirely into my hands; and that, as soon as she was well, I might rely on her. What, I believe, finally decided this lady was the fear that if she did not comply with what I required, I should content myself with the Comtesse d'Aloigny.

Now assured of my introducer, I only directed my attention to the final obstacle to my presentation—I mean, the displeasure of Mesdames. I do not speak of Madame Louise, of whom I can only write in terms of commendation; but I had opposed to me Mesdames Victoire and Sophie, and especially Madame Adelaide, who, as the eldest, gave them their plan of conduct. Madame Adelaide had given but too much cause to be spoken of herself to have any right to talk of others; yet she never ceased haranguing about the scandal of my life, and I had recently, unknown

to myself, fallen into complete disgrace with her. This is the case:

The apartment from which I had dislodged M. de Noailles had been requested of the King by Madame Adelaide. Ignorant of this I had installed myself there. I soon learnt that I had offended the Princess, and instantly hastened to offer her the apartments she wished to have. She came into them; but as it was necessary for me to be accommodated somewhere, the King gave me the former apartments of his daughter. This was what Madame Adelaide called an act of tyranny; she made the Château echo with her complaints. She said I had driven her out, that I wished to separate her from her sisters, that I should wean her father's affection entirely from her. Such injustice distressed me excessively. I sent to request the King to come to me; and when he entered I threw myself at his feet, entreating him to appease his daughter on any terms, and to let me go away, since I brought such trouble into his family.

The King, irritated at Madame Adelaide's conduct, went to her, and told her, in a private interview, that he would make certain matters public if she did not hold her tongue; and she, alarmed, ceased her clamour, or rather, contented herself with complaining in a lower key.

CHAPTER XX

Of the presentation—The King and the Duc de Richelieu at the Comtess du Barri's—M. de la Vauguyon—Conversation—Letter of the Duke to the Comtesse du Barri—Reply—The Countess unites herself with the Jesuit party—Madame Louise—Madame Sophie—M. Bertin—Madame de Bercheny.

THIS fit of anger of Madame Adelaide had given additional courage to the cabal. It began to exclaim and plot against me with redoubled force, hoping thus to intimidate the King, and effectually bar my presentation; but it only tended to hasten it. One evening, when the King and the Maréchal de Richelieu were with me, His Majesty said to me:

"A stop must be put to these clamours. I see that until you are presented there will be doubts perpetually arising and tormenting us on the subject, and until it takes place I shall have no ease. *Parbleu!* let us take the best means in our power of reducing these malcontents to silence."

"Sire," replied the Marshal, "make your will palpable, and you will see all the Court submit."

"Yes; but my daughters?"

"Mesdames know better than any other persons the deference due to your orders."

"I assure you," replied the King, "that it will be an unpleasant quarter of an hour for me to pass."

"Well, Sire, then charge one of us with the mission. The Bishop of Senlis, for instance, or M. de la Vauguyon. I feel assured that either of them will acquit himself admirably in the business, with the previous understanding that Your Majesty will support him with your authority."

"I will do so most assuredly; but it will be best not to use it till at the last extremity. I have no wish to be made a bugbear to my family."

"As to the selection of an ambassador," I interrupted, "I beg it may not fall on M. de Roquelaure; he has been working against me for some time."

"Why not send M. de Jarente?" enquired the King.

"Ah, Sire," replied the Duke, "because we cannot trust him; he is a gay fellow. Madame Sophie might tell him that he only took the part of Madame du Barri because he passes his life amongst petticoats."

"True enough," said the King. "I prefer the Duc de la Vauguyon. He has a good reputation——"

"And well deserved," said the old Marshal, sneering. "Yes, Sire, he is a pious man; at least, he plays his part well."

"Peace! viper. You spare nobody."

"Sire, I am only taking my revenge."

"Why do you not like the governor of my grandsons?"

"In truth, Sire, I must confess to you that, except yourself and the ladies, I have not many likings at Versailles."

Louis XV. smiled, and I pulled the bell. When a valet appeared, I said:

"Go and find M. de la Vauguyon for His Majesty."

"What! already?" said Louis XV. when the valet had departed.

"Madam is right," replied the Duke, "we must strike while the iron is hot."

The King began to pace up and down the room, which was his invariable custom when anything disturbed him. Suddenly stopping, he said, "I should not be astonished at a point blank refusal from M. de la Vauguyon."

"Oh, Sire, make yourself easy; the Governor has no inclination to follow the steps of Montausier or Beauvilliers. In truth, you are very candid; and I must tell you that you have too good an opinion of us."

At this moment M. de la Vauguyon entered. He saluted

the King with humility, and asked him in a mild tone of voice what his pleasure was with him.

"A real mark of your zeal," was the King's reply.

"And of your gallantry," added the Marshal, who saw the hesitation of the King. Louis XV. was enchanted that another should speak for him. M. de Richelieu continued:

"His Majesty, M. le Duc, wishes that you should prepare Mesdames to receive our dear Countess here when she shall appear before them to pay the homage of her respect and devotion."

The King, emboldened by these words, said, "Yes, my dear Duke, you are the only one I can find in the Château who has any influence over the Princesses my daughters. They have much respect, and no less friendship, for you. You will easily bring them to reason."

As M. de la Vauguyon seemed in no hurry to undertake the charge, the Marshal added:

"Yes, sir, to manage this business properly, you and M. de Senlis are the only men in the kingdom."

The Marshal had his reasons for saying this, for a secret jealousy existed between the Governor and the Grand Almoner. M. de la Vauguyon made haste to say that he could not resist His Majesty's orders, and his desire to be agreeable to me.

"Ah! you will, then, do something for me?" I replied. "I am delighted and proud."

"Madam," replied the Duke, with much gravity, "friends, are proved on occasion."

"The present one proves your attachment to me," said I in my turn; "and His Majesty will not think it wrong of me if, as a recompense, I embrace you in his presence"; and, on saying this, I went up to the Duc de la Vauguyon, and gave him two kisses, which the poor man took as quietly as possible.

"That's well," said the King. "La Vauguyon, you are a man of a thousand. Listen attentively to me. I wish much that the Comtesse du Barri should be presented; I wish it, and that, too, in defiance of all that can be said

and done. My indignation is excited beforehand against all those who shall raise any obstacle to it. Do not fail to let my daughters know that if they do not comply with my wishes I will let my anger fall heavily on all persons by whose counsels they may be persuaded; for I only am master, and I will prove it to the last. These are your credentials, my dear Duke, add to them what you may think fitting; I will bear you out in anything——"

"Mercy!" said the Duc de Richelieu to me in an undertone, "the King has poured forth all his energy in words; he will have none left to act upon if he meets with any resistance." The Marshal knew the King well.

"I doubt not, Sire," replied the Duc de la Vauguyon, "that the respectful duty of Mesdames will be ready to comply with your desires."

"I trust and believe it will prove so," replied the King hastily. "I am a good father, and would not that my daughters should give me cause to be angry with them. Let Madame Adelaide understand that she has lately had a mistaken opinion of me, and that she has an opportunity of repairing her error in the present instance. The Princesses are not ignorant that I have often shut my eyes upon certain affairs—— Enough; they must now testify their attachment for me. Why should they oppose the presentation of the Countess? *Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!* they were not so squeamish in the days of Madame de Pompadour."

At these latter words I could not forbear laughing. The Duc de la Vauguyon and the Duc de Richelieu left us, and here the conversation terminated.

The next morning they brought me a note from the Duc de la Vauguyon. Thus it ran:

"MADAM,—Ready to serve you, I wish to have a few minutes' conversation with you. Be persuaded that I will not tell you anything but what will be agreeable and useful to you."

I instantly answered:

"You are too good a friend for me to refuse to see you willingly under any circumstances, and particularly the present. Your conduct yesterday assures you my eternal regard. Come instantly; my grateful heart expects you with impatience."

My sister-in-law, to whom I showed this correspondence, said to me, "This gentleman does not come to see you for your bright eyes; and yet his visit is not disinterested."

"What interest can he have to serve?"

"None of his own, perhaps; but those villainous Jesuits."

"Don't you like them, sister of mine?"

"I hate nobody."

The Duc de la Vauguyon arrived; and as soon as we were alone he said to me:

"Well, madam, I am now on the point of going to fight your battles. I have to deal with a redoubtable foe."

"Do you fear?"

"Why, I am not over-confident; my position is a delicate one. Mesdames will, perforce, obey the orders of the King; but they will not find much pleasure in seeing me the ambassador sent to them; all the Choiseul party will vociferate loudly. Nevertheless, to prove my devotion to you, I brave it all."

"You may rely on it that I will never forget the service you are about to render me."

"I have only one favour to ask of you. Authorise me to say to Mesdames that if the pleasures of life distract your attention from religious duties your soul is in truth fully devoted to our holy religion; and that, far from supporting the philosophers, you will aid, by your influence with the King, every measure advantageous to the Society of Jesuits.

The hypocritical tone in which this was uttered almost compelled me to burst out into a fit of laughter; but the serious posture of my affairs induced me to preserve my gravity, and I answered in a serious tone:

"Not only, M. le Duc, do I authorise you to say so much, but I beg you to declare to Mesdames that I am already filled with love and respect for the Jesuits, and that it will not be my fault if they do not return amongst us."

"Ah, you are a treasure of wisdom," replied the Duke, kissing my hand with fervour, "and I am disgusted at the way in which you are calumniated."

"I know no reason for it, for I have never done harm

to any person. Assure Mesdames that I am sincerely grieved that I am not agreeable to them, and would give half my life to obtain, not their friendship, of which I do not feel myself worthy, but their indifference. Deign also to tell them that at all times I am at their disposal, and beseech them to consider me as their humble servant."

"It is impossible to behave more correctly than you do; and I am confident that Mesdames will soon discard their unjust prejudices. Thus, it is well understood that our friends will be yours."

"Yes, yes, provided they are really mine."

"Certainly. I answer for them as I answer for you."

And thus, my friend, did I find myself allied to the Jesuitical party.

The Duke commenced the attack with Madame Louise, the most reasonable of the King's daughters. This angelic Princess, already occupied with the pious resolution which she afterwards put into execution in the following year, contented herself with saying some words on the commotion occasioned by my presence at Versailles; and then, as if her delicacy had feared to touch on such a subject, she asked the Duc de la Vauguyon if the King ordered her to receive the Comtesse du Barri.

"Yes, madam," replied the Duke; "it is the express will of His Majesty."

"I submit to his wish. The lady may come when she will."

The Duke, contented with his success so far, went next to Madame Sophie. This Princess was not unkind, but subject to attacks of the nerves, which from time to time soured her natural disposition. She had her caprices of hatred, her fits of love. The day when the Duke talked to her of my presentation she was very much provoked against me; and, after the opening speech of the ambassador, flung in his teeth the report of the apartments, which I have already told you. The Duke explained to her, and that too without saying anything unfavourable of Madame Adelaide, and concluded by begging her to concede the favour I besought. Madame

eluded this by saying that before she gave a definite reply she wished to confer with her sisters.

Madame Victoire was not more easily persuaded. This Princess had amiable qualities, solid virtues which made her loved and respected by the whole Court; but she had but little will of her own, and allowed herself to be led by the Choiseuls, who, to flatter her, told her that she alone had inherited the energy of her ancestor, Louis XIV. She was advised to display it in this instance, and she would willingly have done so. The Comtesse de Bercheny, one of her ladies-in-waiting, was the person who urged her on to the greatest resistance. This lady did not cease to exclaim against me, and to fan the flame of displeasure which but for her would never have appeared. I was informed of the mode adopted by Madame de Bercheny to injure me. I sent for M. Bertin, who was devoted to my service, and begged him to go and speak to the lady; he went, and made her understand that the King, enraged against her, would expel her from Versailles if she were not silent. The Comtesse de Bercheny was alarmed, and, under pretence of taking a tour, left the Court for a month. You will see anon the result of all these conferences.

CHAPTER XXI

The Princesses consent to the presentation of Madame du Barri—Ingenious artifice employed by the King to offer a present to the Duc de la Vauguyon—Madame du Barri's letter respecting it—The Duke's reply—The King's letter—The Court in despair—Verses concerning Madame du Barri—Her presentation—A change in public opinion—An evening party at the house of the Countess—Joy of her partisans—Conversation with the Chancellor respecting the lady of the Maréchal de Mirepoix.

The departure of the Comtesse de Bercheny was announced to the Princesses in the manner least likely to provoke their regrets. Nevertheless, as rumour never slept at Versailles, a whisper was quickly circulated throughout the Castle that this sudden and unexpected journey had originated in the King's weariness of her continual philippics against me; and it was clearly comprehended by all that a similar disgrace would be the portion of those who should offend the monarch whilst seeking to procure my humiliation. This show of firmness was sufficient to repress the daring flights of those self-constituted heroines whose courage lasted only whilst the King was silent, and who trembled like a leaf before the slightest manifestation of his will. Still the cabal against me, though weakened, was not destroyed; it was too strong for the present shock to dissolve it; and, although none were sufficiently hardy to declare open war, plots were continually going on to ensnare me.

Meanwhile Madame Victoire, left to herself, could not long support such excessive animosity; and the Duc de la Vauguyon, profiting by the species of lassitude into which she appeared to have fallen, led her without difficulty to act in conformity to the King's wishes.

There remained now, therefore, but Madame Adelaide to overcome, and the task became more difficult in proportion

to the elevated rank she occupied at Court. By priority of birth she held the first place there; and hitherto this superiority had been ceded to her without dispute, more particularly since the hand of death had removed both the Queen her mother and the Dauphiness her sister-in-law. She therefore could only view with uneasiness the prospect of another appearing on the stage whose influence would be greater than hers, and who (until the young Dauphiness should attain to years of maturity) might deprive her of all honours but those due to her birth. Madame Adelaide was gifted with good sense, affability of manner, and a kind and compassionating heart towards all who needed her aid; her disposition was good, but she loved dominion, and the least show of resistance to her wishes was painful and offensive to her. She was determined to uphold the Duc de Choiseul; and my decided manner towards that minister plainly evinced how little I should feel inclined to support her view of things. There were, therefore, several reasons for my presence at Court being unpleasant to Madame Adelaide.

Against her, therefore, did the Duc de la Vauguyon direct his batteries. She received his attack with the most determined obstinacy; all was in vain, she was unconquerable, and the most skilfully-devised plans were insufficient to surmount her resistance. It was therefore necessary to have recourse to the clergy, who were at that time completely led by the Jesuits; each member of the Church, up to the Archbishop of Paris, was called upon to interfere, or their names were employed in default of their presence. It was pointed out to Madame Adelaide that I possessed good intentions with feelings of religion, which, however, stifled by the freedom of the age, only required careful management to produce a rich development. The success of this last mode of attack astonished the Duke himself; and Madame, dazzled by the hopes of my conversion, as well as weary of hostilities, yielded her consent to my being presented. After these private negotiations the four sisters met at the house of the elder one; and there they decided, that since the King had so expressly manifested his pleasure relative to

my presentation, they should conform to the desire of their father, by receiving me with every possible mark of courtesy.

The Duc de la Vauguyon hastened to communicate to me this happy state of things; and my joy was so great that I embraced him with the sincerest warmth, assuring him that I should always look upon him as my best friend, and seek to testify my regard at every opportunity that fell in my way of forwarding his interests.

Some days afterwards the King brought me a splendid ring, worth thirty-six thousand livres.

"You must send this jewel to your good friend the Duke," said he.

"I dare not," replied I. "I fear, lest it should draw forth his displeasure."

"No, no," cried the King; "it is not the fashion at Court to construe gifts like this into insults; but I should wish this trifle to be presented in an indirect manner." And, after having considered a moment, "I have it!" exclaimed he; "I have thought of a clever expedient. Let us put this ring upon the finger of that Chinese mandarin before us, and give the figure with the ring, considering it merely an appendage to it. Assuredly, the most disinterested man cannot refuse to accept a china figure."

I extolled the King's idea as being a most happy one; and he immediately fitted the ring upon the little finger of the mandarin, which I caused to be carried to the Duc de la Vauguyon, with the following billet:

"MONSIEUR LE DUC,—You have been my best friend. It is to your kind offices that I owe the confirmation of my happiness; but I would secure the continuance of your valuable friendship, and for that purpose I send you a little magical figure, which, placed in your cabinet, will compel your thoughts to occupy themselves with me in spite of yourself. I am superstitious enough to rely greatly upon the talismanic virtue of the charmed porcelain; and further, I must tell you, that I was not its purchaser in the first instance, neither did I adorn it for your acceptance. I should not have ventured to offer more than the assurance of my everlasting esteem and regard for your acceptance. The trifle sent comes from a higher source; and the august hand so dear to both of us deigned to preside over the arrangement. Should there be in it anything at all repugnant to your feelings, I beseech you bear me no ill-will for it; for truly, I may say, I should never have summoned courage to do that which has just been done by him whom all unite in loving and esteeming."

The Duke replied:

"Your talisman is welcome. Yet its magic power, far from augmenting the warmth of my feelings towards you, would have diminished it on account of a certain necessary with which my friendship could have well dispensed. However, what you say on the subject closes my lips. I gratefully acknowledge the daily favours bestowed upon me from the august hand of whom you speak; and I receive with the deepest respect (mingled with regret) the gracious present he deigns to convey to me by you. I own that I should have preferred, to the splendid jewel which bedecked the finger of your deity, a Chinese counterpart, which might indeed have enabled all admiring gazers to say, 'these two are truly a pair.' As for yourself, who would fain pass for nobody in the munificent gift, I thank you at least for the flattering place you assign me in your recollection. Be assured, I feel its full value; and you may confidently reckon upon the disposal of my poor credit, as well as command the little influence I may be said to possess in the Castle. Adieu, madam. I entreat your acceptance of the expression of my most sincere and respectful devotion."

The King, having read M. de la Vauguyon's letter, sent immediately to the china manufactory to purchase the fellow mandarin so much coveted by the Duke, and caused it to be conveyed to him with the following words:

"MY DEAR GOVERNOR,—You are a kind-hearted creature, I know, and a great promoter of domestic harmony; to forward so desirable an end you would fain unite the wife with the husband. Heaven grant that such a measure may indeed bring about your proposed felicity! However, by way of furthering your schemes, I send the Chinese lady, whose beauty I trust will not disturb your repose, for, despite your sanctity, I know you can be as gallant as the rest of us, and possibly this beautiful mandarin may be more lovely in your eyes than in those of the husband for whom she is destined; but in sober earnestness, I would wish you to be convinced that my intention is not to attempt payment for the services rendered me, but simply to evince my sense of their value. There is one beside me at this moment who has given me a kiss to transmit to you—you will easily guess who has had the audacity to enlist me into her service upon such an occasion."

This was one of the recompenses offered to the Duc de la Vauguyon, as a compensation for the public clamour and dislike which sprang up against him in consequence of his zeal for my service. At Versailles, the general ferment was at its height when it became generally known that I had triumphed over all obstacles and that my presentation was certainly to take place. In the midst of all this the desperate odium fell upon the Duc de la Vauguyon, and a general attack was made upon him: his virtues, reputation, talents, qualities, were

made the subject of blame aud scandal—in a word, he was run down by public opinion. But the leaders of the cabal were not the less struck by the news of my success, which sounded in their ears like the falling of a thunderbolt.

The silly Princesse de Gueménée, who, with her husband, has since become a bankrupt to so enormous and scandalous an amount, flew without delay to convey the tidings of my victory to the Duchesse de Grammont, to whom it was a death-blow. All her courage forsook her; she shed bitter tears, and displayed a weakness so much the more ridiculous, as it seemed to arise from the utmost despair. She repaired to Madame Adelaide, before whom she conducted herself in the most absurd and extravagant manner. The good Princess, intimidated by the weakness she had herself evinced in drawing back after she had in a manner espoused the opposite party, durst not irritate her, but, on the contrary, strove to justify her own change of conduct towards me by urging the impossibility of refusing obedience to the express command of the King.

The other Princesses did not evince greater firmness when overwhelmed by the complaints of the cabal, and in a manner bent their knee before the wives of the French nobility, asking their pardon for their father's error in selecting a mistress from any rank but theirs. About this period a song, which I admired greatly, was circulated abroad. My enemies interpreted it to my disadvantage, but I was far from being of the same opinion. It was successively attributed to the most clever men in Paris, and I have myself met with four who each asserted himself to be the author; in justice it should be ascribed to him who appeared the most calculated to have written it, and who indeed claimed it for his own—the Chevalier de Boufflers. I do not know whether you recollect the lines in question. I will transcribe them from memory, adding another verse, which was only known amongst our own particular circle, but which proves most incontestably the spirit of kindness with which the stanzas were composed.

Lise, ta beauté séduit
  Et charme tout le monde.
En vain la duchesse en rougit,
  Et la princesse en gronde,
Chacun sait que Vénus naquit
  De l'écume de l'onde.

En vit-elle moins tous les dieux
  Lui rendre un juste hommage!
Et Paris, le berger fameux,
  Lui donner l'avantage
Même sur la reine des cieux
  Et Minerve la sage?

Dans le sérail du grand seigneur,
  Quelle est la favorite?
C'est la plus belle au gré du cœur
  Du maître qui l'habite:
C'est le seul titre en sa faveur
  Et c'est le vrai mérite.

Que Grammont tonne contre toi,
  La chose est naturelle;
Elle voudrait donner la loi
  Et n'est qu'une mortelle;
Il faut, pour plaire au plus grand roi,
  Sans orgueil être belle.[1]

TRANSLATION.

Thy beauty, seductress, leads mortals astray,
Over hearts, Lise, how vast and resistless thy sway!
Cease, duchess, to blush! cease, princess, to rave—
Venus sprang from the foam of the ocean wave.

All the gods pay their homage at her beauteous shrine,
And adore her as potent, resistless, divine!
To her Paris, the shepherd, awarded the prize
Sought by Juno the regal and Pallas the wise.

Who rules o'er her lord in the Turkish serail,
Reigns queen of his heart and e'er basks in his smile?
'Tis she, who resplendent, shines loveliest of all,
And beauty holds power in her magic thrall.

Then heed not the clamours that Grammont may raise,
How natural her anger! how vain her dispraise!
'Tis not a mere mortal our monarch can charm,
Free from pride is the beauty that bears off the palm.

---

1 From those readers who may understand this *chanson* in the original, and look somewhat contemptuously on the English version, the translator begs to shelter himself under the well-known observation of Lord Chesterfield, "that everything suffers by translation but a bishop!" Those to whom such a dilution is necessary will, perhaps, be contented with the skim milk as they cannot get the cream.—TRANS.

This song was to be found in almost every part of France. Although the last couplet was generally suppressed, so evident was its partial tone towards me, in the midst of it all I could not help being highly amused with the simplicity evinced by the good people of France, who, in censuring the King's conduct, found nothing reprehensible but his having omitted to select his mistress from elevated rank.

The citizens resented this falling off in Royalty with as much warmth and indignation as the grandees of the Court; and I could enjoy a laugh on the subject of their angry displeasure as soon as my presentation was decided upon.

The intrigues carried on by those about the Princesses and the necessity of awaiting the perfect recovery of Madame de Bearn delayed this (to me) important day till the end of the month of April, 1770. On the evening of the 21st the King, according to custom, announced a presentation for the following day; but he durst not explain himself more frankly. He hesitated, appeared embarrassed, and only pronounced my name in a low and uncertain voice; it seemed as though he feared his own authority was insufficient to support him in such a measure. This I did not learn till some time afterwards; and when I did hear it, I took the liberty of speaking my opinion upon it freely to His Majesty.

On the next day, the 22nd, I was solely engrossed with my dress: it was the most important era of my life, and I would not have appeared on it to any disadvantage. A few days previously the King had sent me, by the Crown jeweller, Bœhmer, a set of diamonds, valued at 150,000 livres, of which he begged my acceptance. Delighted with so munificent a present, I set about the duties of the toilette with a zeal and desire of pleasing which the importance of the occasion well excused. I will spare you the description of my dress; were I writing to a woman I would go into all these details; but as I know they would not be to your taste, I will pass over in silence all these uninteresting particulars, and proceed to more important matters.

Paris and Versailles were filled with various reports. Throughout the city, within, without the castle, all manner

of questions were asked, as though the monarchy itself was in danger. Couriers were despatched every instant with fresh tidings of the great event which was going on. A stranger who had observed the general agitation would easily have remarked the contrast between the rage and consternation of my enemies and the joy of my partisans, who crowded in numbers to the different avenues of the Palace, in order to feast their eyes upon the pageantry of my triumphal visit to Court.

Nothing could surpass the impatience with which I was expected; hundreds were counting the minutes, whilst I, under the care of my hairdresser and robemaker, was insensible of the rapid flight of time, which had already carried us beyond the hour appointed for my appearance. The King himself was a prey to an unusual uneasiness; the day appeared to him interminable; and the eagerness with which he awaited me made my delay still more apparent. A thousand conjectures were afloat as to the cause of it. Some asserted that my presentation had been deferred for the present, and, in all probability, would never take place; that the Princesses had opposed it in the most decided manner, and had refused upon any pretence atever to admit me to their presence. All these suppositions charmed my enemies, and filled them with hopes in which their leaders, better informed, did not partake.

Meanwhile the King's restlessness increased; he kept continually approaching the window to observe what was going on in the courtyard of the Castle, and seeing there no signs of my equipage being in attendance, began to lose both temper and patience. It has been asserted that he gave orders to have the presentation put off till a future period, and that the Duc de Richelieu procured my *entrée* by force; this is partly true and partly false. Whilst in ignorance of the real cause of my being so late, the King said to the first gentleman of the chamber:

"You will see that this poor Countess has met with some accident, or else that her joy has been too much for her, and made her too ill to attend our Court to-day. If

that be the case, it is my pleasure that her presentation should not be delayed beyond to-morrow."

"Sire," replied the Duke, "Your Majesty's commands are absolute."

These words, but half understood, were eagerly caught up, and interpreted their own way by those who were eager to seize anything that might tell to my prejudice.

At length I appeared; and never had I been more successful in appearance. I was conducted by my godmother, who, decked like an altar, was all joy and satisfaction to see herself a participator in such pomp and splendour. The Princesses received me most courteously; the affability, either real or feigned, which shone in their eyes as they regarded me, and the flattering words with which they welcomed my arrival, was a mortal blow to many of the spectators, especially to the ladies of honour. The Princesses would not suffer me to bend my knee before them, but at the first movement I made to perform this act of homage, they hastened to raise me, speaking to me at the same time in the most gracious manner.

But my greatest triumph was with the King. I appeared before him in all my glory, and his eyes declared in a manner not to be misunderstood by all around him the impetuous love which he felt for me. He had threatened the previous evening to let me fall at his feet without the least effort on his part to prevent it. I told him that I was sure his gallantry would not allow him to act in this manner; and we had laid a bet on the matter. As soon as I approached him, and he took my hand to prevent me, as I began to stoop before him, "You have lost, Sire," said I to him.

"How is it possible to preserve my dignity in the presence of so many graces?" was his reply.

These gracious words of His Majesty were heard by all around him. My enemies were woefully chagrined; but what perfected their annihilation was the palpable lie which my appearance gave to their false assertions. They had blazoned forth everywhere that my manners were those of a house-

maid; that I was absurd and unladylike in my conduct; and that it was only requisite to have a glimpse of me to recognise both the baseness of my extraction and the class of society in which my life had been hitherto spent.

But I showed manners so easy and so elegant that the people soon shook off their preconceived prejudice against me. I heard my demeanour lauded as greatly as my charms and the splendour of my attire. Nothing could be more agreeable to me. In a word, I obtained complete success, and thenceforward learnt experimentally how much the exterior and a noble carriage add to the consideration in which a person is held. I have seen individuals of high rank and proud behaviour who carried no influence in their looks, because their features were plain and commonplace; whilst persons of low station, whose faces were gifted with natural dignity, had only to show themselves to attract the respect of the multitude.

Nothing about me bespoke that I was sprung from a vulgar stock, and thus scandal of that kind ceased from the day of my presentation; and public opinion having done me justice in this particular, slander was compelled to seek for food elsewhere.

That evening I had a large circle at my house. The Chancellor, the Bishop of Orleans, M. de Saint-Florentin, M. Bertin, the Prince de Soubise, the Ducs de Richelieu, de la Trémouille, de Duras, d'Aiguillon, and d'Ayen. This last did not hesitate to come and spy out all that passed in my apartments, that he might go and spread it abroad, augmented by a thousand malicious commentaries. I had also M. de Sartines, my brother-in-law, &c. The Duc de la Vauguyon alone was absent. I knew beforehand that he would not come, and that it was a sacrifice which he thought himself compelled to make to the cabal. The ladies were Mesdames de Bearn and d'Aloigny, with my sisters-in-law. Amongst the ladies presented they were the only ones with whom I had formed any intimacy; as for the rest, I was always the "horrible creature," of whom they would not hear speak on any account.

The King, on entering, embraced me before the whole party. "You are a charming creature," said he to me, "and the brilliancy of your beauty has to-day reminded me of the device of my glorious ancestor."

This was a flattering commencement; the rest of the company chimed in with their master, and each tried to take the first part in the chorus. The Duc d'Ayen even talked of my grace of manner. "Ah, sir," said I to him, "I have had time to learn it from Pharamond to the reigning King."

This allusion was bitter, and did not escape the Duke, who turned pale in spite of his presence of mind, on finding that I was aware of the malicious repartee which he had made to the King when talking of me, and which I have already mentioned to you. The Chancellor said to me:

"You have produced a great effect, but especially have you triumphed over the cabal by the nobility of your manners and the dignity of your mien; and thus you have deprived it of one of its greatest engines of mischief, that of calumniating your person."

"They imagined, then," said I to him, "that I could neither speak nor be silent, neither walk nor sit still."

"As they wished to find you ignorant and awkward they have set you down as such. This is human nature; when we hate anyone we say they are capable of anything; then, that they have become guilty of everything; and, to wind up all, they adopt for truth to-day what we invented last night."

"Were you not fearful?" enquired the King.

"Forgive me, Sire," I answered, "when I say that I feared lest I should not please Your Majesty, and I was excessively desirous of convincing Mesdames of my respectful attachment."

This reply was pronounced to be fitting and elegant; although I had not in any way prepared it. The fact is that I was in great apprehension lest I should displease the King's daughters; and I dreaded lest they should manifest too openly the little friendship which they had towards me. Fortunately all passed off to a miracle, and my good star did not shine dimly at this supreme moment.

Amongst those who rejoiced most at my triumph I cannot forget the Duc d'Aiguillon. During the whole of the day he was in the greatest agitation. His future destiny was, in a measure, attached to my fortune; he knew that his whole existence depended on mine; and he expected from me powerful support to defend him against the pack of his enemies who were yelping open-mouthed against him. He stood in need of all his strength of mind and equanimity to conceal the disquietude and perplexity by which he was internally agitated.

The Comte Jean also participated in this great joy. His situation at Court was not less doubtful; he had no longer reason to blush for his alliance with me, and could now form, without excess of presumption, the most brilliant hopes of the splendour of his house. His son, the Vicomte Adolphe, was destined to high fortune; and I assure you that I deeply regretted when a violent and premature death took him away from his family. My presentation permitted his father to realise the chimera which he had pursued with so much perseverance. He flattered himself in taking part with me. I did not forget him in the distribution of my rewards; and the King's purse was to him a source into which he frequently dipped with both hands.

The next day I had a visit from the Chancellor.

"Now," said he, "you are at the height of your wishes, and we must so arrange matters that the King shall find perpetual and varied amusements with you. He does not like large parties; a small circle is enough for him; then he is at his ease, and likes to see the same faces about him. If you follow my advice you will have but few females about you, and select that few with discernment."

"How can I choose them at all when I see so very few?" was my reply. "I have no positive intimacy with any Court lady; and amongst the number I should be at a loss to select anyone whom I would wish to associate with in preference to another."

"Oh! do not let that disturb you," he replied. "They leave you alone now because each is intent on observing what

[redacted]

others may do; but as soon as anyone shall pay you a visit, the others will run as fast after you as did the sheep of Panurge. I am greatly deceived if they are not very desirous that one of them shall devote herself, and make the first dash, that they may profit by her pretended fault. I know who will not be the last to come and station herself amongst the furniture of your apartment. The Maréchale de Mirepoix was too long the complaisant friend of Madame de Pompadour not to become, and that very soon, the friend of the Comtesse du Barri."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, "how delighted I should be to have the friendship of this lady, whose wit and amiable manners are so greatly talked of."

"Yes," said De Maupeou, laughing, "she is a type of Court ladies, a mixture of dignity and suppleness, majesty and condescension, which is worth its weight in gold. She was destined from all eternity to be the companion of the King's female friends."

We both laughed; and the Chancellor went on to say, "There are others whom I will point out to you by-and-by. As for this one, I undertake to find out whether she will come first of the party. She has sent to ask an audience of me concerning a suit she has in hand. I will profit by the circumstance to come to an explanation with her about you. She is not over fond of the Choiseul party, and I augur this because I see that she puts on a more agreeable air towards them.

CHAPTER XXII

The Comte de la Marche, a Prince of the Blood—Madame de Beauvoir, his mistress—Madame du Barri complains to the Prince de Soubise of the Princesse de Guemênée—The King consoles the Countess for this—The Duc de Choiseul—The King speaks to him of Madame du Barri—Voltaire writes to her—The opinions of Richelieu and the King concerning Voltaire.

Amongst those personages who came to compliment me on the evening of my presentation was M. le Comte de la Marche, son of the Prince de Conti, and consequently Prince of the Blood. He had long been devoted to the will of Louis XV. As soon as His Most Serene Highness had wind of my favour he hastened to add to the number of my court; and I leave you to imagine how greatly I was flattered at seeing it augmented by so august a personage.

This conquest was most valuable in my eyes, for I thus proved to the world that by attracting the King to me I did not isolate him from the whole of his family. It is very true that for some time the Comte de la Marche had been out of favour with the public by reason of his over complaisance towards the ministers of the King's pleasures; but he was not the less a Prince of the Blood, and at Versailles this rank compensated for almost every fault. He was a lively man. Moreover, his society was agreeable, and the title he bore perfected his distinction amongst a crowd of courtiers. I felt, therefore, that I ought to consider myself as very fortunate that he deigned to visit me, and I accordingly received him with all the civility I could display; and the welcome reception which he always experienced drew him frequently to my abode.

The friendship with which he honoured me was not

agreeable to my enemies, and they tried by every possible means to seduce him from me. They got his near relations to talk to him about it; his intimate friends to reason with him; the females whom he most admired to dissuade him from it. There was not one of these latter who did not essay to injure me in his estimation by saying that he dishonoured himself by an acquaintance with me. There was amongst others a Marquise de Beauvoir, the issue of a petty nobility, whom he paid with sums of gold, although she was not his mistress by title. Gained over by the Choiseuls, she made proposals concerning me to the Prince of so ridiculous a nature that he said to her impatiently, "I' faith! my dear, as in the eyes of the world every woman who lives with a man who is not her husband is a ———, so I think a man is wise to choose the loveliest he can find, and in this way the King is at this moment much better off than any of his subjects."

Only imagine what a rage this put the Marquise de Beauvoir in; she stormed, wept, had a nervous attack. The Comte de la Marche contemplated her with a desperate tranquillity, but this scene continuing beyond the limits of tolerable patience he was so tired of it that he left her. This was not what the Marquise wished, and she hastened to write a submissive letter to him, in which, to justify herself, she confessed to the Prince that in acting against me she had only yielded to the instigations of the cabal, and particularly alluded to Mesdames de Grammont and de Guémenée.

The Comte de la Marche showed me this letter, which I retained in spite of his resistance and all the efforts he made to obtain possession of it again. My intention was to show it to the King, and I did not fail to give it to him at the next visit he paid me. He read it, and shrugging up his shoulders, as was his usual custom, he said to me:

"They are devils incarnate and the worst of the kind; they try to injure you in every way, but they shall not succeed. I receive also anonymous letters against you;

they are tossed into the post-box in large packets with feigned names, in the hope that they will reach me. Such slanders ought not to annoy you. In the days of Madame de Pompadour the same thing was done; the same schemes were tried to ruin Madame de Châteauroux. Whenever I have been suspected of any tenderness towards a particular female every species of intrigue has been instantly put in requisition. "Moreover," he continued, "Madame de Grammont attacks you with too much obstinacy not to make me believe but that she would employ all possible means to attain her end."

"Ah!" I exclaimed, "because she has participated in your friendship you are ready to support her."

"Do not say so in a loud tone," he replied, laughingly; "her joy would know no bounds if she could believe it was in her power to inspire you with jealousy."

"But," I said, "that insolent Guémenée! has she also to plume herself on your favours as an excuse for overpowering me with her hatred, and tear me to pieces in the way she does?"

"No," was the King's answer; "she is wrong, and I will desire her father-in-law to say so."

"And I will come to an explanation with the Prince de Soubise on this point, and we shall see whether or not I will allow myself to have my throat cut like an unresisting sheep."

I did not fail to keep my word. The Prince de Soubise came the next morning. Chance on that day induced him to be extraordinarily gallant towards me; never had he praised me so openly or with so much exaggeration. I allowed him to go on; but when at length he had finished his panegyric, "M. le Maréchal," said I to him, "you are overflowing with kindness towards me, and I wish that all the members of your family would treat me with the same indulgence."

Like a real courtier he pretended not to understand me and made no reply, hoping, no doubt, that the warmth of conversation would lead me to some other subject; but

this one occupied me too fully to allow me to divert my attention from it; and, seeing that he continued silent, I continued, "Far from treating me as well as you do, madame your daughter-in-law behaves towards me like a declared enemy; she assails me by all sorts of provocation, and at last will do so that I shall find myself compelled to struggle against her with open force."

You must be a courtier, you must have been in presence of a King who is flattered from morning to night in all his caprices, to appreciate the frightful state in which my direct attack placed the Prince de Soubise. Neither his political instinct, nor the tone of pleasantry which he essayed to assume, nor the more dangerous resource of offended dignity could extricate him from the embarrassment into which he was thrown by my words. He could do nothing but stammer out a few unintelligible phrases; and his confusion was so great and so visible that the Marquis de Chauvelin, his not over sincere friend, came to his assistance. The King, equally surprised at what I had just said, hastily turned and spoke to Chon, who told me afterwards that the astonishment of Louis XV. had been equal to that of the Prince de Soubise, and that he had evinced it by the absence of mind which he had manifested in his discourse and manners.

M. de Chauvelin then turning towards me, said:

"Well, madam, on what evil herb have you walked to-day? Can it be possible that you would make the Prince, who is your friend, responsible for the hatred which ought to be flattering rather than painful to you, since it is a homage exacted towards your brilliant loveliness?"

"In the first place," I replied, "I have no intention to cast on M. le Maréchal, whom I love with all my heart, the least responsibility relative to the object of which I complain. I only wished to evince to him the regret I experienced at not seeing all the members of his family like him; this is all. I should be in despair if I thought I had said anything that could wound him, and if I have done so, I most sincerely ask his pardon."

On saying these words I presented my hand to the Prince, who instantly kissed it.

"You are," said he, "at the same time cruel and yet most amiable; but if you could have the painful advantage of growing old at Court, you will learn that my children have not all the deference and respect towards me which they owe to their father; and I often am pained to see them act in a manner entirely opposite to my desires, however openly manifested. If my daughter does not love you, it is to me, most probably, that you must look for the *why* and *wherefore;* it is because I love you so much that she is against you. I have committed an error in praising you before her, and her jealousy was not proof against it."

"That is very amiable in you," said I; "and now whatever may be my feelings against the Princesse de Gueménée, I will endeavour to dissemble it out of regard for you; and, I assure you that, however little consideration your daughter-in-law may testify towards me, I will show her a fair side. Endeavour to make peace between us. I only ask to be let alone, for I do not seek to become the enemy of any person."

Although M. de Soubise said that he had no influence over the Princesse de Gueménée, I learnt, subsequently, that the day after this scene he testified to his daughter some fears as to his future destiny at Court. He begged her not to oppose herself to me, to be silent with respect to me, and to keep herself somewhat in the shade if she would not make some advances towards me. His daughter-in-law, whose arrogance equalled her dissipation and dissolute manners, replied, that she was too much above a woman of my sort to fear or care for me; that my reign at the Château would be but brief, whilst hers would only terminate with her life; that she would never consent to an act of weakness that would be derogatory to her character and rank. In vain did the Prince try to soften her and make her consider that my influence over the King was immense. He preached to the desert, and was compelled to abandon his purpose without getting anything by his endeavours.

I now return to my conversation with him. During the time it lasted the King did not cease talking to Chon, all the time listening with attention to what the Prince and I were saying; and he did not approach us until the intervention of M. de Chauvelin had terminated this kind of a quarrel. He returned to his seat in front of the fire; and when we were alone, said to me:

"You have been very spiteful to the poor Marshal, and I felt keenly for him."

"You are an excellent friend; and, no doubt, it is the affection you bear to M. de Soubise which makes you behave so harshly to me. Can I not, without displeasing you, defend myself when I am attacked?"

"I did not say so; but is it necessary that he must be responsible for the follies of his relations?"

"In truth, Sire, so much the worse for the father who cannot make his children respect him. If the Marshal were respected by the public, believe me he would be so by his family."

This retort was, perhaps, too severe. I found this by the silence of the King; but as, in fact, it imported little—and, by God's help, I was never under much constraint with him—I saw him blush, and then he said to me, "Now, I undertake to bring Madame de Gueménée into proper order. The favour I ask is, that you would not meddle. I have power enough to satisfy you; but, for heaven's sake, do not enter into more quarrels than you have already. It seems to me that you ought to avoid them instead of creating such disturbances."

He had assumed a grave tone in reading me this lecture; but as we were in a place in which *lèse-majesté* could not be committed, I began to laugh heartily, and, to startle him, I said that henceforward I would pilot my barque myself, and defend myself by openly assailing all persons who testified an aversion to me. How laughable it was to see the comic despair into which this determination threw the King! It seemed to him that the whole Court would be at loggerheads; and he could not restrain himself from exclaiming

that he would a hundred times rather struggle against the King of Prussia and the Emperor of Germany united than against three or four females of the Château. In a word, I frightened him so completely that he decided on the greatest act of courage he had ever essayed in my favour: it was, to desire the intervention of the Duc de Choiseul in all these quarrels.

The credit of this minister was immense, and this credit was based on four powerful auxiliaries—namely, the Parliament, the philosophers, the literati, and the women. The high magistracy found in him a public and private protector. The Parliaments had themselves a great many clients, and their voices, given to the Duc de Choiseul, gave him great power in the different provinces. The philosophers, ranged under the banner of Voltaire, who was their god, and of D'Alembert, their patriarch, knew all his inclinations for them, and knew how far they might rely on his support in all attempts which they made to weaken the power of the clergy and to diminish the gigantic riches which had been amassed by prelates and monasteries. The writers were equally devoted to him; they progressed with the age, and as on all sides they essayed to effect important reforms, it was natural that they should rally about him in whose hands was the power for their operations.

The ladies admired his gallantry; in fact, the Duc de Choiseul was a man who understood marvellously well how to combine serious labours with pleasure. I was, perhaps, the only woman of the Court whom he would not love, and yet I was not the least agreeable nor the most ugly. It was very natural for them to exalt his merit and take him under their especial protection. Thus was he supported in every quarter by them. They boasted of his measures, and by dint of repeating in the ears of everybody that M. de Choiseul was a minister *par excellence* and the support of monarchy, they had contrived to persuade themselves of the truth of their assertion. In fact, if France found herself freed from the Jesuits, it was to the Duc de Choiseul that this was owing, and this happy result assured to him universal gratitude.

Caricatures of Voltaire





The King was fully aware of this unanimity of public opinion in favour of his minister. He was, besides, persuaded that, in arranging the *pacte de famille* and concluding the alliance with the Imperial House, the Duc de Choiseul had evinced admirable diplomatic talents and rendered France real and important service. His attachment to him was incumbent, and rested on solid foundations. If, at a subsequent period, he dismissed him, it was because he was deceived by a shameful intrigue, which it will cost me pain to relate to you, because I took by far too much of a leading part in it, which now causes me the deepest regret.

Now, by the act of my presentation, the Duc de Choiseul would be compelled to meet me often, which would render our mutual situation very disagreeable. On this account the King sought to reconcile us, and would have had no difficulty in effecting his wishes had he only had the resistance of the minister and his wife to encounter. And the lady had not much influence over her husband; besides that, she had too much good sense to struggle against the wishes of the King. But the Duchesse de Grammont was there, and this haughty and imperious dame had so great an ascendency with her brother, and behaved with so little caution, that the most odious reports were in circulation about their intimacy.

It could scarcely be hoped that we could tame this towering spirit which saw in me an odious rival. Louis XV. did not flatter himself that he could effect this prodigy, but he hoped to have a greater ascendency over his minister. It was to the Duc de Choiseul, therefore, that he first addressed himself, desirous of securing the husband and wife before he attacked the redoubtable sister. The next morning, after my warm assault on the Prince de Soubise, he profited by an audience, which the Duke requested at an unusual hour, to introduce this negotiation of a new kind; and the details I give you of this scene are the more faithful, as the King brought them to me still warm immediately after the conversation had terminated.

The State affairs having been concluded, the King, seeking

to disguise his manifest embarrassment, said with a smile to the Duke:

"Duc de Choiseul, I have formed for my private hours a most delightful society. The most attached of my subjects consider themselves highly favoured when I invite them to these evening parties so necessary for my amusement. I see, with pain, that you have never yet asked me to admit you there."

"Sire," replied the Duke, "the multiplicity of the labours with which Your Majesty has charged me scarcely allows me time for my pleasures."

"Oh, you are not so fully occupied but that you have still some time to spend with the ladies, and I think that I used to meet you frequently at the Marquise de Pompadour's."

"Sire, she was my friend."

"Well, and why, is not the Comtesse du Barri? Who has put it into your head that she was opposed to you? You do not know her; she is an excellent woman. Not only has she no dislike to you, but even desires nothing more than to be on good terms with you."

"I must believe so, since Your Majesty assures me of it. But, Sire, the vast business with which I am overwhelmed——"

"Is not a sufficing plea. I do not allow that, without a special motive, you should declare yourself against a person whom I honour with my protection. As you do not know her, and cannot have anything to urge against her but prejudices founded on false rumours and scandalous fabrications, I engage you to sup with me at her apartments this evening, and I flatter myself that when I wish it you will not coin a parcel of reasons in opposition to my desire."

"I know the obedience that is due to Your Majesty," said De Choiseul, bowing low.

"Well, then, do first from duty what I flatter myself you will afterwards do from inclination. Duc de Choiseul, do not allow yourself to be influenced by advice that will prove injurious to you. What I ask cannot compromise you; but I should wish that with you all should be quiet,

that no one should struggle against me, and that, too, with the air of contending against a person of common station. Do not reply; you know perfectly what I would say, and I know what belongs to myself."

Here the conversation terminated. The Duc de Choiseul did not become my friend any the more, but behaved towards me with all due consideration. He used grace and *finesse* in his proceedings, without mingling with it anything approaching to nonsense. He never allowed himself, whatever has been said, to utter in my presence any of those epigrams which public malignity has attributed to him. Perhaps, like many other persons in the world, he has said many pleasantries of me which have been reported as said to my face, but I repeat that he never uttered in my society a single word with which I had cause to be offended.

At this juncture I received a letter of which I had the folly to be proud, although a little reflection should have made me think that my situation alone inspired it. It was from M. de Voltaire. This great genius was born a courtier. Whether he loved the protection of the great, or whether he thought it necessary to him, he was constantly aiming, from his youth upwards, at obtaining the countenance of persons belonging to a high rank, which made him servile and adulatory whilst they were in power and full of grimace towards them when the wind of Court favour ceased to swell their sails. It was in this way that Mesdames de Châteauroux and de Pompadour had had his homage. He had sung their praises, and, of course, he could not forget me. You will recall to mind the letter which he wrote to the Duc d'Aiguillon, on occasion of the piece of poetry entitled "La Cour du Roi Petaud." He had denied having composed it, but this denial had not been addressed directly to me. Having learnt, no doubt, that my credit was increasing, he thought himself obliged to write to me, that he might rank me with his party. He might have availed himself of the intermediacy of the Duc d'Aiguillon, but preferred taking the Duc de Richelieu into his confidence.

He begged him to fulfil the delicate function of literary Mercury. I was alone when the Marshal came to me with an assumed air of mystery. His first care was to look around him without saying a word; and it was not until after he had shaken the curtains and peered into every corner of the apartment that he approached me, who was somewhat surprised at his monkey tricks.

"I am the bearer," he said, in a low voice, "of a secret and important communication, which I have been entreated to deliver after at least five or six hundred cautions. It is a defection from the enemy's camp, and not the least in value."

Fully occupied by my quarrel with the ladies of the Court, I imagined that he had brought me a message of peace from some great lady, and, full of this idea, I asked him in haste the name of her whose friendship I had acquired.

"Good," said he; "it is about a lady, is it? It is from a personage fully as important, a giant in power, whose words resound from one extremity of Europe to another, and whom the Choiseuls believe their own entirely."

"It is M. de Voltaire," I said.

"Exactly so; your sagacity has guessed it."

"But what does he want with me?"

"To be at peace with you; to range himself under your banner, secretly at first, but afterwards openly."

"Is he, then, afraid openly to evince himself my friend?" I replied, in a tone of some pique.

"Rather so; and yet you must not feel offended at that. The situation of this sarcastic and talented old man is very peculiar; his unquiet petulance incessantly gives birth to fresh perils. He, of necessity, must make friends in every quarter, left and right, in France and foreign countries. The necessary consequence is that he cannot follow a straight path. The Choiseuls have served him with perfect zeal: do not be astonished if he abandons them when they can no longer serve him. If they fall he will bid them good evening, and will sport your cockade openly."

[redacted]

"But," I replied, "his is a villainous character."

"Ah, I do not pretend to introduce to you an Aristides or an Epaminondas, or any other soul of similar stamp. He is a man of letters, full of wit, a deep thinker, a superior genius, and our reputations are in his hands. If he flatter us, posterity will know it; if he laugh at us, it will know it also. I counsel you, therefore, to use him well if you would have him behave so towards you."

"I will act conformably to your advice," said I to the Marshal; "at the same time I own to you that I fear him like a firebrand."

"I, like you, think that there is in him something of the stone of the Inferno: he burns you on the slightest touch. But now, to this letter; you will see what he says to you. He begs me most particularly to conceal from everybody the step he has taken with you. What he most dreads is that you should proclaim from the housetops that he is in correspondence with you. I conjure you, on his behalf, to exercise the greatest discretion, and I think that you are interested in doing so; for, if what he has done is made public, he will not fail to exercise upon you the virulence of his biting wit."

Our conversation was interrupted by a stir which we heard in the Château, and which announced to us the King. The Marshal hastily desired me not to show Voltaire's letter to the King until I had read it previously to myself. "He does not like this extraordinary man," he added, "and accuses him of having failed in respect, and perhaps you will find in this paper some expressions which may displease him."

Scarcely had I put the epistle in my pocket, when the King entered.

"What are you talking about?" said he; "you seem agitated."

"Of M. de Voltaire, Sire," I replied, with so much presence of mind as to please the Duc de Richelieu.

"What, is he at his tricks again? Have you any cause of complaint against him?"

"Quite the reverse; he has charged M. d'Argental to say

to M. de Richelieu that he was sorry that he could not come and prostrate himself at my feet."

"Ah," said the King, remembering the letter to the Duc d'Aiguillon, "he persists in his coquetries towards you: that is better than being lampooned by him. But do not place too much confidence in this gentleman of the chamber: he weighs everything in two scales; and I doubt much whether he will spare you when he evinces but little consideration for me."

Certainly Richelieu had a good opportunity of undertaking the defence of his illustrious friend. He did no such thing; and I have always thought that Voltaire was the person whom the Duke detested more heartily than any other person in the world. He did, in fact, dread him too much to esteem him as a real friend.

"M. d'Argental," said the King, "unites, then, at my Court the double function of minister of Parma and steward of Ferney. Are these two offices compatible?"

"Yes, Sire," replied the Duke, laughing, "since he has not presented officially to Your Majesty the letters of his creation as Comte de Tournay."

The King began to laugh. This was the name of an estate which Voltaire had, and which he sometimes assumed.

CHAPTER XXIII

Unpublished letter of Voltaire to Madame du Barri—Reply of the Countess—The Maréchale de Mirepoix—Her first interview with Madame du Barri—Anecdote of the diamonds of Madame de Mirepoix—The King pays for them—Singular gratitude of the Maréchale—The portfolio, and an unpublished letter of the Marquise de Pompadour.

By the way in which the King continued to speak to me of M. de Voltaire I clearly saw how right the Duke was in advising me to read the letter myself before I showed it to my august protector. I could not read it until the next day, and found it conceived in the following terms:

"Madame la Comtesse,—I feel myself urged by an extreme desire to have an explanation with you after the receipt of a letter which M. le Duc d'Aiguillon wrote to me last year. This nobleman, nephew of a gentleman as celebrated for the name he bears as by his own reputation, and who has been my friend for more than sixty years, has communicated to me the pain which had been caused you by a certain piece of poetry, of my writing as was stated, and in which my style was recognised. Alas! madam, ever since the most foolish desire in the world has excited me to commit a great deal of idle trash to paper, not a month, a week, nay, even a day passes in which I am not accused and convicted of some great enormity; that is to say, the malicious author of all sorts of turpitudes and extravagances. Eh! *mon Dieu*, the entire lifetime of ten men would not be sufficient to write all with which I am charged, to my great unutterable despair in this world, and to my eternal damnation in that which is to come.

"It is, no doubt, much to die in final impenitence; although hell may contain all the honest men of antiquity and a great portion of those of our times; and paradise would not be much to hope for if we must find ourselves face to face with MM. Fréron, Nonatte, Patouillet, Abraham Chaumeix, and other saints cut out of the same cloth. But how much more severe would it be to sustain your anger! The hatred of the Graces brings down misfortune on a man of letters; and when he embroils himself with Venus and the Muses he is a lost being; as, for instance, M. Dorat, who incessantly slanders his mistresses and writes nothing but puerilities.

"I have been very cautious in my long career how I committed such a fault. If perchance I have lightly assailed the common cry of scribblers or pedants who were worthless, I have never ceased to burn incense on

the altars of the ladies; them I have always sung when I—could not do otherwise. Independently, madam, of the profound respect I bear all your sex, I profess a particular regard towards all those who approach our Sovereign, and whom he invests with his confidence; in this I prove myself no less a faithful subject than a gallant Frenchman; and I venerate the god I serve in his constant friendships as I would do in his caprices. Thus I was far from outraging and insulting you, still more grievously by composing a hateful work which I detest with my whole heart, and which makes me shed tears of blood when I think that people did not blush to attribute it to me.

"Believe in my respectful attachment, madam, no less than in my cruel destiny, which renders me odious to those by whom I would be loved. My enemies, a portion of whom are amongst yours, certainly succeed each other with frightful eagerness to try my wind. Now they have just published under my name some attacks on the poor President Hénault, whom I love with sincere affection. What have they not attributed to me to inculpate me with my friends, with my illustrious protectors, M. le Maréchal Duc de Richelieu and their Majesties the King of Prussia and the Czarina of Russia!

"I could excuse them for making war upon strangers in my name, although that would be a pirate's method; but to attack, under my banner, my master, my Sovereign Lord, this I can never pardon, and I will raise against them even a dying voice; particularly when they strike you with the same blows; you, who love literature; you, who do me the honour to charge your memory with my feeble productions. It is an infamy to pretend that I fire on my own troops.

"Under any circumstances, madam, I am before you in a very delicate situation. There is in Versailles a family which overwhelms me with marks of its friendship. Mine ought to appertain to it to perpetuity; yet I learn that it is so unfortunate as to have no perception of your merit, and that envious talebearers place themselves between you and it. I am told there is a kind of declared war; it is added that I have furnished supplies for this camp, the chiefs of which I love and esteem. More wise, more submissive, I keep myself out of the way of blows; and my reverence for the supreme master is such that I turn away my very eyes that they may not be spectators of the fight.

"Do not then, madam, think that any sentiment of affection has compelled or can compel me to take arms against you. I would refuse any proposition which should rank me as hostile to you, if the natural generosity of your enemies could so far forget itself. In reality, they are as incapable of ordering a bad action as I am of listening to those who should show themselves so devoid of sense as to propose such a thing to me.

"I am persuaded that you have understood me, and I am fully cleared in your eyes. It would be delightful to me to ascertain this with certainty. I charge M. le Maréchal Duc de Richelieu to explain to you my disquietude on this head, and the favour I seek at your hands, from you who commands France, whilst I, I ought to die in peace, not to displease any person, and live wisely with all. I conclude, Madame la Comtesse, this long and stupid epistle, which is, in fact, less a letter than a real case for consideration, by begging you to believe me, &c.,

"VOLTAIRE,
"Gentleman in Ordinary to the King.

"FERNEY, *April 28th*, 1769."

[redacted]

"P.S.—My enemies say everywhere that I am not a Christian. I have just given them the lie direct by performing my Easter devotions (*mes pâques*) publicly; thus proving to all my lively desire to terminate my long career in the religion in which I was born; and I have fulfilled this important act after a dozen consecutive attacks of fever, which made me fear I should die before I could assure you of my respect and my devotion."

This apology gave me real pleasure. I pretended to believe the sincerity of him who had addressed me, although he had not convinced me of his innocence; and I wrote the following reply to M. le Voltaire, which a silly pride dictates to me to communicate to you in conjunction with the letter of the philosopher:

"MONSIEUR,—Even were you culpable from too much friendship towards those you cherish, I would pardon you as a recompense for the letter you address to me. This ought the more to charm me as it gives me the certainty that you had been unworthily calumniated. Could you have said, under the veil of secrecy, things disagreeable to a great King, for whom, in common with all France, you profess sincere love? It is impossible. Could you, with gaiety of heart, wound a female who never did you harm, and who admires your splendid genius? In fact, could those you call your friends have stooped so low as not to have feared to compromise you by making you play a part unworthy of your elevated reputation? All these suppositions were unreasonable; I could not for a moment admit them, and your two letters have entirely justified you. I can now give myself up without regret to my enthusiasm for you and your works. It would have been too cruel for me to have learnt with certainty that he whom I regarded as the first writer of the age had become my detractor without motive, without provocation. That it is not so I give thanks to Providence.

"M. le Duc d'Aiguillon did not deceive you when he told you that I fed on your sublime poetry. I am in literature a perfect novice, and yet am sensible of the true beauties which abound in your works. I am to be included amongst the stones which were animated by Amphion: this is one of your triumphs; but to this you must be accustomed.

"Believe also that all your friends are not in the enemy's camp. There are those about me who love you sincerely: M. de Chauvelin, for instance, MM. de Richelieu and d'Aiguillon. The latter eulogises you incessantly; and if all the world thought as he does, you would be here in your place. But there are terrible prejudices which my candour will not allow me to dissemble, which you have to overcome. There is *one* who complains of you, and this *one* must be won over to your interests. He wishes you to testify more veneration for what he venerates himself; that your attacks should not be so vehement, nor so constant. Is it, then, impossible for yon to comply with his wishes in this particular? Be sure that you, in setting no bounds in your attacks on religion, only do yourself a vast mischief with the person in question.

"It will appear strange that I should hold such language to you; I only do it to serve you. Do not take my statements unkindly. I have now a favour to ask of you, which is, to include me in the list of those to whom

you send the first-fruits of the brilliant productions of your pen. There is no one who is more devoted to you and who has a more ardent desire to convince you of this.

"I am, Monsieur le Gentilhomme Ordinaire, with real attachment, &c."

I showed this letter to M. de Richelieu. "Why," he enquired, "have you not assured him as to your indiscretion, which he fears?"

"Because his fear seemed to me unjust, and I leave you to represent me to him as I am. And now," I added, "it does not appear to me necessary for the King to know anything of this."

"You think wisely, madam; what most displeased him was to see Madame de Pompadour in regular correspondence with M. de Voltaire."

I have related to you this episode of my history that it may recompense you for the tiresome details of my presentation. I resume my recital. I told you that M. de Maupeou had told me that he would endeavour to bring Madame la Maréchale de Mirepoix, and introduce her to me, trusting to the friendship she had evinced for Madame de Pompadour during the whole time of the favour and life of her who preceded me in the affections of Louis XV I found, to my surprise, that he said nothing to me concerning it for several days, when suddenly Madame la Maréchale de Mirepoix was announced.

At this name and this title I rose quite in a flurry, without clearly knowing what could be the object of this visit, for which I was unprepared. Following closely on the valet's heels, she did not give me time for much reflection. She took me really *à l'improviste*, and I had not time to go and meet her.

"Madame la Maréchale," said I, accosting her, "what lucky chance brings you to a place where the desire to have your society is so great?"

"It is the feeling of real sympathy," she replied, with a gracious smile; "for I also have longed for a considerable time to visit you, and have yielded to my wishes as soon as I was certain that my advances would not be repulsed."

"Ah, madam," said I, "had you seriously any such fear? That tells me much less of the mistrust you had of yourself than of the bad opinion you had conceived of me. The honour of your visits——"

"The honour of my visits! That's admirable! I wish to obtain a portion of your friendship and to testify to the King that I am sincerely attached to him."

"You overwhelm me, madam," cried I, much delighted, "and I beg you to give me your confidence."

"Well, now, all is arranged between us: I suit you and you please me. It is long since I was desirous of coming to you, but we are all under the yoke of the most absurd tyranny; soon we shall have no permission to go, to come, to speak, to hold our tongues, without first obtaining the consent of a certain family. This yoke has wearied me; and on the first word of the Chancellor of France I hastened to you."

"I had begged him, madam, to express to you how much I should be charmed to have you when the King graced me with his presence. He likes you; he is accustomed to the delights of your society; and I should be deeply chagrined to have come here to deprive him of that pleasure."

"He is a good master," said Madame de Mirepoix; "he is worthy of all our love. I have had opportunities of knowing him thoroughly, for I was most intimate with Madame de Pompadour, and I believe that my advice will not be useless to you."

"I ask it of you, Madame la Maréchale, for it will be precious to me."

"Since we are friends, madam," said she, seating herself in a chair, "do not think ill of me if I establish myself at my ease and take my station as in days of yore. The King loves you: so much the better, you will have a double empire over him. He did not love the Marquise, and allowed himself to be governed by her; for with him—I ask pardon of your excessive beauty—custom does all. It is necessary, my dear Countess, to use the double lever you have, of your own charms and his constant custom to do to-morrow what

he does to day, because he did it yesterday, and for this you lack neither grace nor wit."

I had heard a great deal concerning Madame de Mirepoix; but I own to you that before I heard her speak I had no idea of what sort of a person she would prove. She had an air of so much frankness and truth that it was impossible not to be charmed by it. The greater part of the time I did not know how to defend myself from her; at once so natural and so perfidious; and occasionally I allowed myself to love her with all my heart, so much did she seem to cherish me with all enthusiasm. She had depth in her wit, a piquancy of expression, and knew how to disguise those interested adulations with turns so noble and beautiful that I have never met, neither before nor since, any woman worthy of being compared with her. She was, in her single self, a whole society; and certainly there was no possibility of being wearied when she was there. Her temper was most equable, a qualification rarely obtained without a loss of warmth of feeling. She always pleased, because her business was to please, and not to love; and it always sufficed her to render others enthusiastic and ardent. Except this tendency to egotism, she was the charm of society, the life of the party which she enlivened by her presence. She knew precisely when to mourn with the afflicted, and when to joke with the merry-hearted. The King had much pleasure in her company. He knew that she only thought how to amuse him; and, moreover, as he had seen her from morning till evening with the Marquise de Pompadour, her absence from my parties was insupportable to him, and almost contrary to the rules of etiquette at the Château.

I cannot tell you how great was his satisfaction when, at the first supper which followed our intimacy, he saw her enter. He ran to meet her like a child, and gave a cry of joy, which must have been very pleasing to the Maréchale.

"You are a dear woman," he said to her, with an air which accorded with his words; "I always find you when

I want you; and you can nowhere be more in place than here. I ask your friendship for our dear Countess."

"She has it already, Sire, from the moment I saw her; and I consider my intimacy with her as one of the happiest chances of my life."

The King showed the utmost good temper in the world during the rest of the evening. He scolded me, however, for the mystery I had made in concealing from him this agreeable visit. I justified myself easily by the pleasure which this surprise caused him; and, on my side, gave my sincere thanks to the Chancellor.

"You owe me none," said he; "the good Maréchale felt herself somewhat ill at ease not to be on close terms with her who possesses the affections of the King. It is an indispensable necessity that she should play a part in the lesser apartments; and as the principal character no longer suits her, she is contented to perform that of confidant, and ran here on my first intimation."

"Never mind the motive that brought her," I said; "she is a companion for me much more desirable than Madame de Bearn."

"First, from her rank," said the Chancellor, smiling maliciously, "and then, by virtue of her cousinship with the Holy Virgin."

I confess that I was ignorant of this incident in the House of Levi; and I laughed heartily at the description of the picture, in which one of the lords of this house is represented on his knees before the Mother of God, who says to him, "*Rise, cousin*"; to which he replies, "*I know my duty too well, cousin.*" I took care, however, how I joked on this point with the Maréchale, who listened to nothing that touched on the nobility of the ancestors of her husband, or on those of her own family.

Great had been the outcry in the Palace against the Duc de la Vauguyon and Madame de Bearn, but how much louder did it become on the defection of the Marquise de Mirepoix. The cabal was destroyed; for a woman of rank and birth like the Maréchale was to me a conquest of the

utmost importance. The Princesse de Gueménée and the Duchesse de Grammont were woefully enraged; this they manifested by satirical sneers, epigrams and verses, which were put forth in abundance. All these inflictions disturbed her but little; the main point in her eyes was to possess the favour of the master, and she had it, for he felt that he was bound to her by her complaisance.

He was not long in giving her an unequivocal proof of his regard. The Duc de Duras asked her, in presence of the King and myself, why she did not wear her diamonds as usual.

"They are my representatives," was her reply.

"What do you mean by representatives?" said I.

"Why, my dear Countess, they are with a Jew instead of my sign-manual. The rogue had no respect for the word of a relation of the Holy Virgin and the daughter of the Beauvau. I was in want of thirty thousand francs, and to procure it I have given up my ornaments, not wishing to send to the Jew the old plate of my family, although the hunks wanted it."

We all laughed at her frankness and the gaiety with which she gave this statement, but we went no further—to her great regret, no doubt, for I believe that the scene had been prepared between her and M. de Duras, either to let her profit in time of need or else that she wished to pluck a feather from our wing. When I was alone with the King he said:

"The poor Maréchale pains me; I should like to oblige her, and think I will give her five hundred louis."

"What will such a petty sum avail her? You know what she wants; either send her the whole or none. A King should do nothing by halves."

Louis XV. answered me nothing; he only made a face, and began to walk up and down the room. "Ah!" said I to myself, "a King in a quandary."

"This excellent woman loves Your Majesty so much that you ought to show your gratitude to her, were it only to recompense her for her intimacy with me."

[redacted]

"Well, you shall carry her the sum yourself, which Lebel shall bring you from me. But thirty thousand francs! that makes a large pile of crown-pieces."

"Then I must take it in gold."

"No, but in good notes. We must not, even by a look, intimate that she has *sold* her visits to us. There are such creatures in the world!"

The next morning Lebel brought me a very handsome rose-coloured portfolio, embroidered with silver and auburn hair; it contained the 30,000 francs in notes. I hastened to the Maréchale. We were then at Marly.

"What good wind blows you hither?" said Madame de Mirepoix.

"A Royal gallantry," I replied. "You appeared unhappy, and our excellent Prince sends you the money necessary to redeem your jewels."

The eyes of the lady became animated, and she embraced me heartily. "It is to you that I owe this bounty of the King."

"Yes, partly—to make the present entire. He would only have given you half the sum."

"I recognise him well in that he does not like to empty his casket. He would draw on the public treasury without hesitation for double the revenue of France and would not make a division of a single crown of his own private *peculium*."

I give this speech verbatim; and this was all the gratitude which Madame de Mirepoix manifested towards Louis XV. I was pained at it, but made no remark. She took the portfolio, examined it carefully, and, bursting into a fit of laughter, said, while she flung herself into an arm-chair, "Ha! ha! ha! this is an unexpected *rencontre!* Look at this portfolio, my dear friend. Do you see the locks with which it is decorated? Well, they once adorned the head of Madame de Pompadour. She herself used them to embroider this garland of silver thread; she gave it to the King on his birthday. Louis XV. swore never to part with it, and here it is in my hands.

Then, opening the portfolio, and rummaging it over, she found in a secret pocket a paper, which she opened, saying, "I knew he had left it."

It was a letter of Madame de Pompadour, which I wished to have, and the Maréchale gave it me instantly; the notes remained with her. I copy the note to give you an idea of the sensibility of the King:

"SIRE,—I am ill; dangerously so, perhaps. In the melancholy feeling which preys upon me I have formed a desire to leave you a souvenir which will always make me present to your memory. I have embroidered this portfolio with my own hair; accept it; never part with it. Enclose in it your most important papers, and let its contents prove your estimation of it. Will you not accord my prayer? Sign it, I beseech you; it is the caprice, the wish of a dying woman."

Beneath it was written:

"This token of love shall never quit me.—LOUIS."

[redacted]

CHAPTER XXIV

Conversation of the Maréchale de Mirepoix with the Comtesse du Barri on Court friendship—Intrigues of Madame de Bearn—Preconcerted meeting with Madame de Flavacourt—Rage of Madame de Bearn—Portrait and conversation of Madame de Flavacourt with the Comtesse du Barri—Insult from the Princesse de Gueménée—Her banishment—Explanation of the King and the Duc de Choiseul relative to Madame du Barri—The Comtesse d'Egmont.

However giddy I was I did not partake of the excessive gaiety of Madame de Mirepoix. I was pained to see how little reliance could be placed on the sensibility of the King, as well as how far I could esteem the consideration of the Maréchale for Madame de Pompadour, from whom she had experienced so many marks of friendship. This courtier baseness appeared to me so villainous that I could not entirely conceal how I was affected with displeasure. Madame de Mirepoix saw it and, looking at me attentively, said:

"Do you feel any desire to become pathetic in the country we live in? I warn you that it will be at your own expense. We must learn to content ourselves here with appearances, and examine nothing thoroughly."

"There is, then, no reality?" said I to her.

"Yes," she answered me; "but only two things—power and money; the rest is 'leather and prunella' (*contes bleus*). No person has time to love sincerely; it is hatred only that takes deep root and never dies. To hope to give birth to a real passion, an Orestean and Pyladean friendship, is a dream from which you must be awakened.'

"Then you do not love me?"

"You ask me a very awkward question, my darling, I can tell you. I do love you, and very much, too. I have proved

it by ranging myself on your side, and by declaring with the utmost frankness that I would rather see you in the situation in which you are than any other woman of the Court. But there is a long space between this and heroic friendship. I should deceive you if I were to affirm the contrary, and there would be no common sense in giving faith to my words. Everyone has too much business, too much intrigue, too many quarrels on hand, to have leisure to think of others; everyone lives for himself alone. Mesdames de Guemênée and de Grammont appear very intimate; that is easily explained: they unite against a common enemy. But were your station left vacant, no sooner would the King have thrown the apple to one of them than the other would detest her instantly."

Contrary to custom, I made no reply: I was absorbed in painful reflections to which this conversation had given rise. The Maréchale perceived it, and said:

"We should fall into philosophy if we probed this subject too deeply. Let us think no more of this; besides, I have a new defection to tell you of. Madame de Flavacourt told me yesterday that she much regretted having misunderstood you, and that you were worth more than all those who persecute you. She appeared to me disposed to ally herself with you for the least encouragement which you might be induced to hold out to her."

"You know very well," I replied, "that I am willing to adopt your advice. The House of Flavacourt is not to be despised, and I ask no better than to be on amicable terms with the lady."

"Well, then, come this morning and walk in the grove nearest the pavilion. I shall be there with Madame de Flavacourt; we will meet by *chance*, compliments will follow, and the alliance will be formed."

The Maréchale and I had scarcely separated when Madame de Bearn was announced. This lady besieged me night and day. Gifted with a subtle and penetrating spirit—that talent which procures advancement at Court—she saw with pain that I sought to attract other women about

me; she would fain have remained my only friend, that she might, unopposed, influence me in all I did. She saw, therefore, with uneasiness the appearance of Madame de Mirepoix in my drawing-room; her bad humour was sufficiently apparent to attract the notice of the Maréchale, who laughed at it—her social position as a titled woman and the King's friendship giving her confidence that her credit would always exceed that of my godmother.

Madame de Bearn was compelled to submit to the ascendency of the Maréchale, but yet did not the less relax in her efforts to keep from me all other female society; she hoped that at last the King would distinguish her, and call her into his intimacy as my friend. She was not more fond of the Comtesse d'Aloigny, although the nullity of this lady need not have alarmed her much. For me, I began to resent the irksomeness of having incessantly at my side a person who manifested too openly her desire to compel me to submit to her wishes, and I only waited, to secure my freedom, until the circle of women I could admit to my society should be extended.

Such were our reciprocal feelings during our stay at Marly. Madame de Bearn watched me with more care than at Versailles, fearing, no doubt, that the freedom of the country might facilitate connections prejudicial to her interests. Little did she anticipate on this day the stroke which was in preparation for her. I asked her spitefully to take a turn with me in the park, and I took care not to announce the meeting which we had arranged.

Behold us, then, walking this way and that, quite by chance, without however going any distance from the pavilion. Madame de Bearn, not liking the vicinity of the château, was desirous to go into the wood. I declined this under vain excuses, when suddenly Madame de Mirepoix and Madame de Flavacourt appeared at the end of a very short walk.

"Let us turn this way," said the Countess to me, "here comes one of our enemies, whom it would be as well to avoid.

"Why turn away?" I replied. "She is alone, there are two of us; and besides the Maréchale de Mirepoix is not opposed to us."

Saying this, I advanced towards them. Madame de Flavacourt appeared very gracious. I replied to her advances with due politeness, and, instead of separating, we continued to walk about together. Madame de Bearn saw clearly that chance was not the sole cause of this meeting. She dissembled as well as she could. I afterwards learnt that she owed me a spite, particularly for the mystery which I had made of this occurrence. The marked silence and the sullen air she assumed during this interview, and which her sense and knowledge of the world should have prevented her from manifesting, proved to me on this occasion, as on many others, that temper cannot always be conquered, and that at times it will burst forth in spite of the experience and caution of the courtier.

I did not give myself much trouble on this subject. I had well recompensed the good offices of the Countess. I had ample proof that in serving me she had acted on the impulse of self-interest; we were quits, I thought, and I saw no reason why I should remain isolated just to serve her pleasure.

When we returned to my apartments I saw plainly, by her mutterings, her sighs, and the shrugging of her shoulders, that she was deeply irritated at what had just taken place. She was desirous of provoking an explanation, but as that could only tend to her disadvantage she contented herself with leaving me earlier than her usual wont, without saying anything disagreeable. Her custom was not to leave me alone, and her abrupt departure confirmed me in the idea I had imbibed, that this sort of comedy had much thwarted her.

In the course of the same day I received a visit from the Comtesse de Flavacourt. This lady, whose sparkling eyes shone with an air of mischief, presented herself to me with an appearance of openness and confidence which perfectly cloaked the malignity and treachery of her character.

She threw her arms round my neck with as much grace as tenderness, and, taking my hand as if to arrest my attention, said, "I ought, madam, to explain to you the delay that I have made before I introduce myself to you, as well as the promptitude of this my first visit. I was prejudiced against you, and had formed a false estimate of you. My *liaison* with Mesdames d'Egmont, de Brionne and de Grammont naturally placed me in the rank opposed to you. So much for what has passed. But I have seen you; I have studied you at a distance, as well as close, and I have recognised, without difficulty, the injustice of your enemies. I have been enraged with myself for having been deceived regarding you; I wish to repair my wrongs. Enlightened by the opinion of the Maréchale de Mirepoix, I have not hesitated to approach you under her auspices, and our first meeting has so happily furnished me with an opportunity of appreciating you that I would not delay any longer the pleasure of making to you a personal avowal of my past sentiments, and of those with which you now inspire me."

The tone in which Madame de Flavacourt uttered these words was so gracious and so persuasive that I could not resist the pleasure of embracing her. She returned my kiss with the same eagerness, and would not listen to my thanks.

"All is explained between us," she continued; "let us forget the past, and let us act as if meeting for the first time to-day; we henceforward date this as the first of our acquaintance."

"The affability with which you have presented yourself to me," I replied, "does not permit me to believe that I have only known you from this morning. I am in an illusion which will only allow me to look on our recent alliance as an ancient friendship."

After having exchanged some conversation of the same tenour, we talked of my situation as regarded the other females of the Court.

"They hate you for two reasons," said the Countess; "in the first place, because you have made a conquest which all the world envies you; secondly, because you are not one of

us. There is not one family who can lean on you in virtue of the rights of blood, or alliances which stand instead of it. You have superseded a woman who more than any other could have a claim to your good fortune; she is sister to the Prime Minister, who has in her train, like Lucifer, more than a third part of heaven, for all the courtiers hang on her brother. On the other hand, we are not accustomed to remain so long in opposition to the will of the King. Such a resistance is not natural to us; it weighs upon us, it harms us, the favour of our master being our chief good. We are only something through him, and when combatting against him we have neither the courage nor the perseverance. Thus you may be very certain that the majority of women who oppose you do it against the grain; and if you add to this that they are incessantly exposed to the murmurs and complaints of their husbands, sons, brothers and lovers, you will easily be convinced that they only aspire to find a means of reconciling the regard they owe to the Choiseuls, and the terror which they inspire, with the desire they have to seek your protection and the friendship of the King. The cabal only flies on one wing, and I cannot divine its situation at the commencement of the next winter. Do not disquiet yourself any more with what it can do; keep yourself quiet; continue to please the 'master,' and you will triumph over the multitude as easily as you have conquered the resistance of Mesdames."

Such was the language of the Comtesse de Flavacourt. It agreed, as you will perceive, with that of Madame de Mirepoix, and I ought the more to believe it as it was the fruit of their experience and profound knowledge of Court manners. Their example proved to me, as well as their words, that all those who approached the King could not bear for a long time the position in which he placed those whom he did not look upon with pleasure.

However, Louis XV. evinced more plainly from day to day the ascendency I had over his mind. He assisted publicly at my toilette, he walked out with me, left me as little as possible, and sought by every attention to console me for the impertinences with which they continued to bespatter

me. The following anecdote will prove to you how little consideration he had for those persons who dared to insult me openly.

One day, at Marly, I entered the drawing-room; there was a vacant seat near the Princesse de Gueménée; I went to it, and scarcely was seated when my neighbour got up, saying, "What horror!" and betook herself to the further end of the room. I was much confused: the offence was too public for me to restrain my resentment, and even when I wished to do so the thing was scarcely possible. The Comte Jean, who had witnessed it, and my sisters-in-law, who learnt it from him, were enraged. I was compelled to complain to the King, who instantly sent the Princesse de Gueménée an order to quit Marly forthwith, and betake herself to the Princesse de Marsan, *gouvernante* of the children of the Royal Family of France, of whose post she had the reversion.

Never did a just chastisement produce a greater effect. The outcry against me was louder than ever. It seemed as though the whole nobility of France was immolated at "one fell swoop." To have heard the universal clamour, it would have been thought that the Princess had been sent to the most obscure prison in the kingdom. This proof of the King's regard for me did much mischief, no doubt, as it furnished my enemies with a pretext to accuse me of a vindictive spirit. Could I do otherwise? Ought I to have allowed myself to be overwhelmed with impunity? and was it consonant with the dignity of my august protector that I should be insulted thus openly by his subjects, his courtiers, his guests, even in the private apartments of his palace?

However, this wrath of the nobility did not prevent the Choiseul family from experiencing a feeling of fright. They had just received a signal favour. The government of Strasbourg, considered as the key of France and Alsace, had been given in reversion to the Comte de Stainville, brother of the Duc de Choiseul. Certainly this choice was a very great proof of the indulgence of the King, and the moment was badly chosen to pay with ingratitude a benefit so important. This did not hinder the Duchesse de Grammont and all the

women of her house, or who were her allies, from continuing to intrigue against me. It was natural to believe that the King would not permit such doings for a long time, and that, should he become enraged at them, that I should attempt to soothe his anger.

Matters were in this state when one morning, after his accustomed routine, the Duc de Choiseul requested a private audience of the King. "I grant it this moment," said the King. "What have you to say to me?"

"I wish to explain to Your Majesty how excessively painful is the situation in which I am placed with regard to some of the members of my family. All the females, and my sister at their head, attack me about a quarrel which is strange to me, and with which I have declared I would not meddle."

"You do well, M. le Duc," said the King, with cool gravity. "I am much vexed at all that is going on, and have resolved not to suffer it any longer."

The decision of this discourse made a deep impression on M. de Choiseul; he sought to conceal it whilst he replied:

"It is difficult, Sire, to make women listen to reason."

"All are not unreasonable," rejoined the King; "your wife, for instance, is a model of reason and wisdom; she has perfect control of herself. She is the wise woman of Scripture."

This flattery and justly-merited eulogium, which the King made of the Duchess whenever he found an opportunity, was the more painful to M. de Choiseul, as his conduct was not irreproachable towards a woman whose virtues he alone did not justly appreciate. It was a direct satire against his sister's conduct, whose ascendency over her brother the King well knew. He replied that the good behaviour of his wife was the safeguard of his family, and he greatly regretted that the Duchesse de Grammont had not a right to the same eulogium.

"I beg you," said the King, "to persuade her to change her language, and to conduct herself with less boldness, if she would not have me force her to repent."

"That, Sire, is a mission painful to fulfil, and words very hard to convey to her."

"So much the worse for her," replied the King, elevating his voice. "If she bear any friendship for you let her prove it in this particular; your interests should keep her mouth shut."

The Duke had no difficulty in comprehending the indirect menace implied; he instantly renewed his regrets for the *disagreeable* disturbances that had occurred.

"Add *insulting*," said Louis XV. "I am content with you and your services, Duke. I have just proved this to you by giving your brother more than he could expect from me; but have not I the right to have my intimacies respected? It appears to me that if you spoke more decidedly in your family you would command more attention."

"This makes me fear, Sire, that Your Majesty does not believe me sincere in my expression of the regret which I just took the liberty to utter to Your Majesty."

"*Mon Dieu*, M. le Duc, you certainly do not like Madame du Barri."

"I neither like nor hate her, Sire; but I see with trouble that she receives at her house all my enemies."

"Whose fault is that, if it be so? Your own—you, who would never visit her. She would have received you with pleasure, and I have not concealed from you the satisfaction I should have experienced."

These last words made the Duke start; his eyes became animated. After a moment's reflection he said to the King:

"Sire, is it indispensably necessary for the service of the State that I endeavour to attain the goodwill of Madame la Comtesse du Barri?"

"No."

"Would Your Majesty, therefore, repose greater confidence in me?"

"No."

"Well, then, Sire, allow matters to remain as they are. It would cost me much to quarrel with my whole family, the more so as this sacrifice is not useful to you, and would in nowise alter my position with Your Majesty."

However painful to the King such a determination might be, he did not allow the Duke to perceive it; he dissembled the resentment he felt, and contented himself with saying:

"Duc de Choiseul, I do not pretend to impose chains on you; I have spoken to you as a friend rather than as a Sovereign. Now I return to what was said at first, and accept with confidence the promise you make me not to torment a lady whom I love most sincerely."

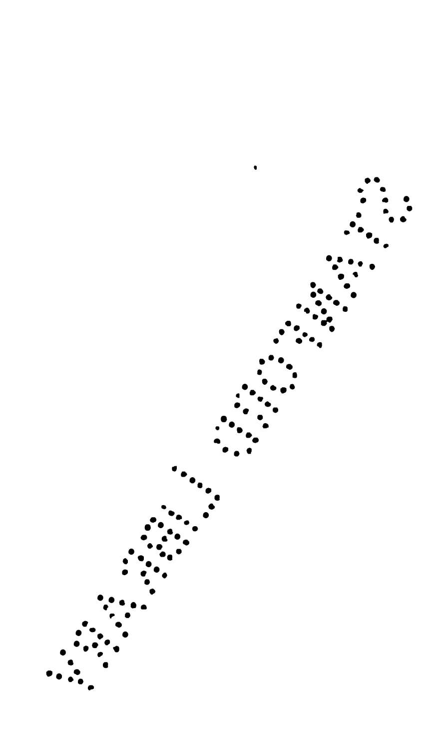
Thus ended a conversation from which the Duke, with a less haughty disposition, might have extracted greater advantages and played a sure game. It was the last plank of safety offered in the shipwreck which menaced him. He disdained it; the opportunity of seizing it did not present itself again. I doubt not that if he would have united himself freely and sincerely with me I should not have played him false. Louis XV., satisfied with his condescension in my behalf, would have kept him at the head of his Ministry; but his pride ruined him; he could not throw off the yoke which the Duchesse de Grammont had imposed on him; he recoiled from the idea of telling her that he had made a treaty of peace with me, and that was not one of the least causes of his disgrace.

The journey to Marly gave birth to a multitude of intrigues of persons who thought to wrap themselves up in profound mystery, and all whose actions we knew. The police were very active about the Royal abodes, especially since the fatal deed of the regicide Damiens. To keep it perpetually on the alert, it was ordered to watch attentively the amours of the lords and ladies of the Court.

The daughter of the Duc de Richelieu, the Comtesse d'Egmont, whose age was no pretext for her follies, dearly liked low love adventures. She used to seek them out in Paris when she could find none at Versailles. She was not, however, the more indulgent towards me. This lady was not always content with noble lovers, but sought them in all classes; and more than once simple mortals, men of low order, obtained a preference over demi-gods. Her conduct in this respect was the result of long experience. She used

Chateau de Marly

From the Engraving by J. Rigaud



to go out alone and traverse the streets of Paris. She entered the shops, and when her eye rested on a good figure, having wide shoulders, sinewy limbs, and a good-looking face, she then called up all the resources of her mind to form and carry on an intrigue, of which the consequences, at first agreeable to him who was the object of it, terminated most frequently fatally. The following adventure will give you an idea of the talent of Madame d'Egmont in this way, and how she got rid of her adorers when she had exhausted with them the cup of pleasure.

CHAPTER XXV

Intrigue of the Comtesse d'Egmont with a shopman—His unhappy fate—The Comtesse du Barri protects him—Conduct of Louis XV. upon the occasion—The young man quits France—Madame du Barri's letter to the Comtesse d'Egmont—Quarrel with the Maréchal de Richelieu.

The Comtesse d'Egmont was one day observed to quit her house attired with the most parsimonious simplicity; her head being covered by an enormously deep bonnet, which wholly concealed her countenance, and the rest of her person enveloped in a pelisse, whose many rents betrayed its long service. In this strange dress she traversed the streets of Paris in search of adventures. She was going, she said, wittily enough, "to return to the cits what her father and brother had so frequently robbed them of." Chance having led her steps to the Rue St. Martin, she was stopped there by a confusion of carriages, which compelled her first to shelter herself against the wall, and afterwards to take refuge in an opposite shop, which was one occupied by a linen-draper.

She looked around her with the eye of a connoisseur, and perceived beneath the modest garb of a shopman one of those broad-shouldered youths, whose open, smiling countenance and gently tinged complexion bespoke a person whose simplicity of character differed greatly from the vast energy of his physical powers: he resembled the Hercules Farnese upon a reduced scale. The Princess approached him, and requested to see some muslins, from which she selected two gowns, and after having paid for them, requested the master of the shop to send his shopman with them in the course of half an hour, to an address she gave as her usual abode.

The Comtesse d'Egmont had engaged an apartment on

the third floor of a house in the Rue Tiquetonne, which is in the heart of Paris. The portress of the dwelling knew her only as Madame Rossin; her household consisted of a housekeeper and an old man, both devoted to a mistress whose character they well understood, and to whom they had every motive to be faithful. Here it was, then, that the lady hastened to await the arrival of the new object of her plebeian inclinations. Young Moireau (for such was the shopman's name) was not long ere he arrived with his parcel. Madame d'Egmont was ready to receive him; she had had sufficient time to exchange her shabby walking-dress for one which bespoke both coquetry and voluptuousness; the softness of her smile, and the turn of her whole features announced one whose warmth of passions would hold out the most flattering hopes of success to him who should seek her love.

Madame Rossin and the young shopman were soon engaged in conversation, further animated by the bright glances sent direct from the eyes of madam to the unguarded heart of her admiring visitor. Emboldened by the graciousness of her manner, he presumed to touch her fair hand; the lady, in affected anger, rose, and commanded him to quit the house. The terrified youth fell at her feet, imploring pardon for his boldness, and then hastily quitted the room ere the feigned Madame Rossin could pronounce the forgiveness he demanded. "The fool!" was doubtless the Princess's exclamation; "had he been brought up at Court he would have conducted himself very differently."

This silliness of proceeding was, however, far from being displeasing to the Princess; on the contrary, it seemed to increase her determination to prosecute the adventure. Accordingly, on the following day she hastened to resume her former walking-dress, and in it to take the road which led to the Rue St. Martin, and again to present herself as a customer at the linen-draper's shop. This time she purchased cloth for chemises. Indescribable and unspeakable was the joy of young Moireau, when, after having served the mistress of his thoughts, he heard her request of his master to allow the goods she had selected to be sent to her residence; and

equally was he surprised that she omitted to name him as the person she wished should convey them. Nevertheless, as may be imagined, Moireau obtained possession of the parcel, and was soon on his way to the Rue Tiquetonne, where he found the lady more languishing and attractive than before; and soon they were deep in the most earnest and interesting conversation. Moireau, who now saw that his boldness was not displeasing to the lady, became more and more presuming: true, his overtures were refused, but so gently that it only fanned his flame; nor was it till after reiterated prayers that he succeeded in obtaining her promise to meet him on the following Sunday. The Princess, like a skilful manœuvrer, reckoned upon the additional violence his ardour would receive from this delay. The affection with which she had inspired him would only gain strength by thus deferring the day for their next meeting, whilst he would have time to meditate upon the virtue as well as the charms of her he had won.

The long looked for Sunday at length arrived, and Moireau was first at the place of rendezvous. His simple dress augmented his natural good looks, whilst the Countess had spared no pains to render her appearance calculated to captivate and seduce. All reserve was thrown aside; and, to satisfy the eager curiosity of her lover, she stated herself to be the widow of a country lawyer, who had come to Paris to carry on a lawsuit. It would be useless to follow the Princess during the further course of this meeting. Suffice it to say, that Moireau and Madame d'Egmont separated mutually happy and satisfied with each other.

The youth, who was now ages gone in love, had only reached his twenty-second year, and Madame Rossin was his first attachment. So ardent and impetuous did his passion hourly grow, that it became a species of insanity. On the other hand, the high-born dame, who had thus captivated him, felt all the attractions of his simple and untutored love, further set off by the fine manly figure of the young shopman. Indeed, so much novelty and interest did she experience in her new amour, that, far from finding herself, as she had expected, disposed to relinquish the affair at the end of two or

three interviews, which she had imagined would have satisfied her capricious fancy, she put off to an indefinite period her original project of ending the affair by feigning a return to the country.

This resolution, however, she did not feel encouraged to carry into effect; and two or three months rolled rapidly away without any diminution of their reciprocal flame, when one fine Sunday evening Moireau, whose time hung heavily on his hands, took it into his head to visit the Opera. This species of amusement constitutes the *ne plus ultra* of the delights of a French cit. Moireau seated himself in the pit, just opposite the box ot the gentlemen in waiting. The performance was *Castor and Pollux*. At the commencement of the second act a sudden noise and bustle drew Moireau from the contemplative admiration into which the splendour of the piece had thrown him. The disturbance arose from a general move, which was taking place in the box belonging to the gentlemen in waiting. Madame d'Egmont had just arrived, attended by four or five grand lords of the Court covered with gold, and decorated with the Order of the Holy Ghost, and two ladies richly dressed, from whom she was distinguished as much by the superior magnificence of her attire as by her striking beauty.

Moireau could not believe his eyes; he felt assured he beheld Madame Rossin, yet he fancied he must be under the influence of some fantastic dream; but every look, every gesture of the Princess, a thousand trifles, which would have escaped the notice of a common observer, but which were engraved in indelible characters on the heart of her admirer, all concurred to assure him that he recognised in this lovely and dazzling female, so spendidly attired and so regally attended, the cherished mistress of his affections; she whom that very morning he had held in his embrace. He addressed a thousand questions to those about him, from whom he learnt his own good fortune and the exalted rank of her he had won. Scarcely could he restrain the burst of his joy when informed that the fair object, glittering in jewels and radiant in beauty, was the daughter of Richelieu and

the wife of one of the Princes of the noble House of Egmont.

A thousand tumultuous and flattering ideas rushed in crowds to the brain of young Moireau, and he saw in anticipation a long and brilliant vista opening before him. Poor inexperienced youth! he mistook the wisest and safest path, which would have been to have appeared ignorant of the high rank of his mistress, and to have induced her, from motives of affection, to preside over his fortunes, and to rise by her means without allowing her to suspect he guessed her ability to bestow riches and preferment. He, on the contrary, hastened to her with the account of his having discovered her real rank and station. Madame d'Egmont, whose self-possession enabled her to conceal the terror and uneasiness his recital inspired her with, listened calmly and silently till he had ceased speaking, and then asked him, with a playful smile, if he was quite sure of being in his right senses. "For how otherwise could you," said she, "confuse a poor obscure widow like myself with the rich and powerful Princess you speak of? My friend, you are under the influence of a dream; believe me, I am neither more nor less than poor widow Rossin, and can boast of no claim to the illustrious name of Egmont or Richelieu."

But the more she spoke the less she persuaded, and young Moireau was not to be reasoned out of his conviction of her identity with the high-born Princess of Egmont, and he alternately employed threats and promises to induce her to confess the fact; but the lady was firm and immovable. Resolved at all risks to preserve her incognito, she found herself compelled to bring the affair to a conclusion, by feigning extreme anger at the pertinacity with which Moireau importuned her upon a subject of which she protested she knew nothing. Her lover retaliated, and a desperate quarrel ensued. Moireau rushed angrily from her presence, vowing that he would publish his adventure throughout Paris; an empty threat, which his devotion to the Princess would never have permitted him to carry into execution.

Madame d'Egmont, however, was not so sure that her secret was safe, and she lost not an instant in repairing to the house of M. de Sartines, to obtain from him a *lettre de cachet* against the aspiring shopman, who, seized in the street, was conveyed away and confined as a maniac in a madhouse, where, but for a circumstance you shall hear, he would doubtless be still.

I happened to be with the King when the Lieutenant of Police arrived upon matters connected with his employment. According to custom, Louis enquired whether he had anything very amusing to communicate to him. "Many things, Sire," replied he, "and amongst others, an anecdote of Madame d'Egmont"; and he began to relate to us, word for word, what I have written you. The King laughed till he cried; as for me, although I could not help finding the tale sufficiently comic to induce risibility, I listened with more coolness, and when it was completed, I exclaimed:

"Can it be, Sire, that you will permit this unfortunate young man to be the eternal victim of so unprincipled a woman?"

"What would you have me do?" said Louis. "How can I interfere without compromising the reputation of Madame d'Egmont?"

"Allow me to say," I replied, "that this fear ought not to prevent Your Majesty's interference. You are the father of your subjects; and the respect you entertain for Madame d'Egmont should not outweigh your duty, which imperatively calls upon you to command the release of this wretched young man."

"But," argued the King, "by such a step I shall for ever disoblige the Duc de Richelieu and his family."

"Fear it not," I cried; "if Your Majesty will trust to me I will undertake to bring the Maréchal and his nephew to approve of your proceedings; and as for the rest of his family, let them go where they will; for the empire of the world I should be sorry to bear them company."

This manner of speaking pleased the King; and, turning to M. de Sartines, "Lieutenant of Police," said he, "you

have heard my fair chancellor; you will act in strict conformity with the orders she will transmit you from me."

"Then take those orders now, sir," I said: "in the first place, this ill-treated young Moireau must immediately be set at liberty, and my own police (for I must tell you that I have one) will give me the faithful account of all your proceedings in this affair."

The King comprehended my meaning. "You will keep a careful watch," added he to M. de Sartines, "that no harm befalls this unfortunate youth, who, I beg, you will discreetly recommend to quit France ere the malice of those who have reason to fear his reappearance works him some evil."

"And who, Sire," I asked, "shall dare injure one whom Your Majesty always deigns to honour with your protection?"

"Madam," replied M. de Sartines, "even His Majesty's high patronage cannot prevent a secret blow from some daring hand—a quarrel purposely got up; a beverage previously drugged; a fall from any of the bridges into the river; or, even the supposition of one found dead, having destroyed himself."

"You make me shudder," said I, "in thus unveiling the extent of human depravity. So, then, this young man, whose only fault appears to have been that of captivating the eyes of a noble lady, should perish in a dungeon, or save his life at the sacrifice of country, friends, connections; and all this for having listened to the passion of a woman, as licentious in manners as illustrious by birth: this frightful injustice rouses all my indignation. Well, then, since the power of the monarch of France is insufficient to protect his oppressed subject in his own realms, let him shield him from want in a foreign land by allowing him a pension of one hundred louis. I will take upon myself to defray the expenses of his journey."

Thus saying, I was hastening to the adjoining room, where stood my secretaire, to take from it a thousand crowns I wished to give for the purpose. The King held me back by my arm, saying to me, "You are the most

excellent creature I know of, but you see I am always master. I will undertake to provide for this young man. M. de Sartines," pursued he, "I wish to secure to him a thousand crowns yearly; and, further, you will supply him with six thousand francs ready money, which M. de la Borde will repay to your order. *Now are you satisfied, Couci?*" said the King, turning to me.

My only reply was to throw my arms around his neck without ceremony, spite of the presence of a witness, who might blush at my familiarity. "You are indeed," said I, "a really good Prince; it is only a pity you will not assert your right to reign alone."

"You are a little rebel," cried he, "to doubt my absolute power." This tone of playful gaiety was kept up some time after the departure of the Lieutenant of Police.

M. de Sartines returned next day to tell me that everything had been accomplished according to my desire. "M. Moireau," said he, "has left the prison, and departs for Spain to-morrow morning: his intention is to join some friends of his at Madrid. He is informed of all he owes you, and entreats your acceptance of his most grateful and respectful acknowledgments. Will you see him?"

"That would be useless," I answered; "say to him only that I request he will write to me upon his arrival at Madrid and give me the history of his late adventure in its fullest details."

Moireau did not disappoint me; and as soon as his letter reached me I hastened to copy it, merely suppressing the date of the place from which it was written, and forwarded it immediately to the Comtesse d'Egmont, with the following note:

"The many proofs of tender attachment with which the widow Rossin honoured young Moireau makes me believe that she will learn with pleasure of my having had the good fortune to rescue the ill-fated youth from the cruelty of the Comtesse d'Egmont. This interesting young man no longer groans a wretched prisoner in the gloomy abode that haughty lady had selected for him, but is at this minute safe in a neighbouring kingdom, under the powerful patronage of the King of France, who is in possession of every circumstance relative to the affair. I likewise know the whole of the matter, and have in my keeping the most irrefragable proofs of all that

took place; and should I henceforward have any reason to complain of the Comtesse d'Egmont I shall publish these documents with permission of those concerned.

"The public will then be enabled to judge of the virtue and humanity of one who affects to treat me with a ridiculous disdain. There exists no law against a fair lady having lovers and admirers, but a stern one forbids her to command or procure their destruction. I know all; and Madame d'Egmont's future conduct will decide my silence and discretion. The affair with Moireau is not the only one; others of even a greater sin preceded it. I can publish the whole together; and, I repeat, my determination on this head depends wholly and entirely upon the manner in which Madame d'Egmont shall henceforward conduct herself towards me. I beg Madame de Rossin will allow me to subscribe myself with every feeling she so well merits,

"Her very humble and most obedient servant,

"THE COMTESSE DU BARRI."

I had communicated to no one the secret of this vengeance. I wished to keep the delight of thus exciting the rage of the Princesse d'Egmont all to myself. I was certain that, whatever might henceforward be her line of conduct towards me, whenever she found herself in my presence she would bitterly feel the stings of an accusing conscience and the gnawings of that worm which dieth not in the heart of hypocritical and wicked persons, more especially when compelled to meet the eye of those who could unmask them in a minute.

On the following day I received a visit from the Duc de Richelieu. In spite of the many endeavours he made to appear smiling and good-humoured, a deep rage kept its station round his mouth and contracted his lips even in the midst of the artificial smile with which he sought to dissimulate his wrath.

"Madam, good morning," said he to me. "I come to offer my congratulations; you really are become quite one of us; upon my word, the most experienced courtier has nothing more to teach you."

"I am as yet in ignorance of the cause to which I may ascribe these compliments, M. le Maréchal, which I greatly fear surpass my poor merits, and that you will even be compelled to retract them when I am better known to you."

"Fear it not, madam," said he, "your commencement is a master-stroke; and the letter you yesterday addressed to the Comtesse d'Egmont——"

"Ah! sir," exclaimed I, with unfeigned astonishment, "in her place I certainly should not have selected you as my confidant in the affair."

"And who could she better have selected than her father? But that is not the matter in hand. My daughter is filled with anger against you; and, if I must speak the truth, I do not think your behaviour towards her quite what it should have been."

"Really, monsieur, I was not prepared for a reproach of this kind; and what can Madame d'Egmont allege against me? 'Tis she who has pursued me with the most bitter sarcasms—the most determined malice; and, I may add, the most impertinent behaviour. I entreat your pardon for using such strong expressions, but her behaviour allows of none milder. And what have I done in my turn? Snatched from a lingering death an unfortunate young man, whose only crime consisted in having pleased this unreasonable Madame d'Egmont. I procured the King's protection for the miserable object of the Princess's affection. I obtained his safe removal to another country; and, having done all this, I communicated my knowledge of the transaction to the Comtesse d'Egmont. Does this bear any comparison with her line of conduct towards me?"

"But your letter, madam, your letter——"

"Would bear alterations and amendments, sir, I am aware. I admit I did not sufficiently insist upon the atrocity of such an abuse of power."

"You are then resolved, madam, to make us your enemies."

"I should be very sorry, M. le Duc, to be compelled to such extremities; but if your friendship can only be purchased at the price of my submitting to continually receive the insults of your family, I should be the first to cease to aspire to it. If Madame d'Egmont holds herself aggrieved by me, let her carry her complaint before the Parliament: we shall then see what redress she will get. She has compromised the King's name by an arbitrary act; and since you thus attack me, you must not take it

amiss if I make the King acquainted with the whole business."

The Marshal, surprised at so severe a reply, could no longer restrain the rage which filled him. "I should have thought, madam," said he, "that my daughter, in whose veins flows Royal blood, might have merited some little consideration from the Comtesse du Barri."

"It is as well, then, M. de Duc," replied I, "to point out to you your error. I see in my enemies their works and actions alone, without any reference to their birth, be it high or low; and the conduct of Madame d'Egmont has been so violent and unceasing towards me, that it leaves me without the smallest regret for that I have pursued towards her."

I had imagined that this reply would still further irritate the angry feelings of the Duc de Richelieu, but it did not. He easily guessed that nothing but the King's support could have inspired me to express myself with so much energy; and if paternal vanity strove in his heart, personal interests spoke there with even a louder voice. He therefore sought to lay aside his anger, and, like a skilful courtier, changed his angry look and tone for one of cheerfulness.

"Madam," said he, "I yield; I see it will not do to enter the lists against you. I confess I came this morning but to sound your courage, and already you have driven me off the field vanquished. There is one favour I would implore of your generosity, and that is, to be silent as to all that has transpired."

"I shall not speak of it, M. le Duc," replied I, much moved, "unless you or Madame d'Egmont set me the example."

"In that case the affair will for ever remain buried in oblivion; but, madam, I will not conceal from you that my daughter has become your most bitter and irreconcilable enemy."

"The motives which have actuated me, M. le Maréchal, are such as to leave me very little concern upon that subject. I flatter myself this affair will not keep you away

from *me*, who would fain reckon as firmly on your friendship as you may do on mine."

The Marshal kissed my hand in token of amity, and from that moment the matter was never mentioned.

A similar scene had already occurred with the Prince de Soubise, relative to the exile of his daughter. Was it not somewhat strange, as well as unjust, that all the noblemen of the day wished to preserve for their relations the right of offending me with impunity, without permitting me even the right of defending myself?

CHAPTER XXVI

Madame du Barri separates from Madame de Bearn—Letters between these ladies—Portrait of Madame de l'Hôpital—The ladder—The bell—Conversation with Madame de Mirepoix—First visit to Chantilly—Intrigues to prevent the Countess from going thither—The King's displeasure towards the Princesses—The Archbishop de Senlis.

The spoiled child of fortune, I had now attained the height of my wishes. The King's passion augmented daily, and my empire became such as to defy the utmost endeavours of my enemies to undermine it. Another woman, in my place, would have employed her power in striking terror amongst all who were opposed to her; but for my own part I contented myself with repulsing their attempts to injure me and in proceeding to severity only when my personal interests were too deeply concerned to admit of my passing the matter over in silence.

There was no accusation too infamous to be laid to my charge. Amongst other enormities, they scrupled not to allege that I had been the murderer of Lebel, the King's *valet de chambre*, who died by poison! Was it likely, was it probable that I should seek the destruction of him to whom I owed my elevation, the most devoted of friends and for whom my heart cherished the most lively sense of gratitude? What interest could I possibly derive from the perpetration of such a crime? The imputation was too absurd for belief, but slander cares little for the seeming improbability of such an event. The simple fact remained that Lebel was dead; of course, the cruel and unjust consequence became, in the hands of my enemies, that I had been the principal accessory to it.

My most trifling actions were misrepresented with the same black malignity. They even made it a crime in me to have written to Madame de Bearn, thanking her for her past kindness, and thus setting her at liberty to retire from the mercenary services she pretended to have afforded me. And who could blame me for seeking to render myself independent of her control, or for becoming weary of the tyrannical guidance of one who had taken it into her head that I had become her sole property, and who, in pursuance of this idea, bored and tormented me to death with her follies and exactions, and even took upon herself to be out of humour at the least indication of my attaching myself to any other lady of the Court. According to her view of things, gratitude imposed on me the rigorous law of forming an intimacy with herself alone; in a word, she exercised over me the most galling dominion, which my family had long counselled me to shake off; in truth, I was perfectly tired of bearing the yoke her capricious and overbearing temper imposed upon me, but I determined, if possible, to do nothing hastily, and to endure it with patience as long as I could: but now that the number of my female friends was augmented by the addition of the Marquise de Montmorency and the Comtesse de l'Hôpital I determined no longer to bear the constant display of Madame de Bearn's despotic sway, and, finding no chance of accommodating our tastes and humours, I resolved to free myself from her thraldom. Another powerful reason for this measure was the dislike with which the King regarded her; not that she was deficient in birth or good breeding, but amidst the polish of high life she occasionally introduced the most vulgar and provincial manners, a fault of all others most offensive to the King, whose disgust was further excited by the undisguised avidity with which, at every opportunity, she sought to turn her admission to the King's private society to account, by preferring some request or soliciting some particular favour; instead of giving herself up to the joy and hilarity that reigned around, she seemed always on the watch to seize every possible advantage to herself. Immediately the King was apprised of my intention of dismissing her from any further

cares for me, he said, "You are quite right to get rid of this troublesome woman, who never visits us without calculating the degree of interest she can derive from it, and seems to me, whenever she approaches me, as though she were devising how to obtain some fresh favour from me. And now, too, that the first ladies of the Court fill your drawing-rooms, why should you endure her importunate presence?"

Strengthened by these sentiments on the King's part, I lost no time in writing to Madame de Bearn a letter, of which many false copies were circulated; however, I subjoin the following as the veritable epistle addressed by me to the Countess:

"MADAM,—It would be the height of selfishness on my part to tax further the kindness and attention you have been pleased to show me. I am well aware how many public and private duties claim your care, and I therefore (with much regret) beg to restore to you that liberty you have so so generously sacrificed to my interests. Conscious of the *ennui* which oppresses you in this part of the country, I write to entreat that you will allow no consideration connected with me to detain you longer in a place so irksome, but, since our visit to Marly is concluded, fly upon the wings of impatience to the gay scenes of Paris and Luxembourg. Be assured that it will at all times afford me much pleasure to evince the gratitude with which I shall ever remain,

"Madam, yours sincerely,
"THE COMTESSE DU BARRI."

"P.S.—I am commissioned to entreat your acceptance of the accompanying casket; it is the gift of one whose favours are never refused. You will easily guess to whom I allude, and, I doubt not, bring yourself to conform to the usual custom."

The jewels sent were a pair of ear-rings and an agrafe of emeralds enriched with diamonds. The King was desirous of bestowing upon Madame de Bearn this particular mark of his recollection of her services towards me, but it did not allay the indignation with which she expressed her sense of my "bitter ingratitude," as she termed it, as though her interested co-operation had not been sufficiently repaid. Nevertheless, she forebore to come to a decided quarrel with me, but satisfied herself with loading me with every reproach in private, whilst she wrote to thank me for all the favours I had bestowed upon her, and entreated I would keep her remembrance alive in the mind of my Royal protector.

As there was nothing offensive in the style of the letter, I showed it to the King. When he came to the part where Madame de Bearn recommended herself to his kind recollection and expressed her desire to be permitted to throw herself once more at his feet, "Heaven preserve me," cried he, "from receiving this mark of the lady's respect! No, no; she is bad enough at a distance. I should be bored to death were she so near to me as she prays for. Thank God, we have got rid of her. And now trust to your own guidance; try the powers of your own wings to bear you in safety. I feel persuaded you will never be at a loss."

About this time the Prince de Soubise, anxious to evince that he no longer retained any feelings of coolness towards me, requested his mistress, Madame de l'Hôpital, to call upon me. This lady, without being a regular beauty, was yet very attractive. She was past the meridian of her charms, but what she wanted in youth she amply compensated for by the vivacity and brilliancy of her conversation, as well as the freedom of her ideas, which made her the idol of all the old libertines of the Court. The Prince de Soubise was greatly attached to her, and preferred her, in reality, to Mademoiselle Guimard, whom he only retained for form's sake, and because he thought it suitable to his dignity to have an opera singer in his pay. This nobleman (as you will find) had rather a singular idea of the duties attached to his station.

Madame de l'Hôpital had had a vast number of gallant adventures, which she was very fond of relating. I shall mention only two of the most amusing, which will serve to convey an idea of the skilfulness and ready wit with which she extricated herself from the most embarrassing circumstances.

A young man, whose love she permitted, whose name was the Chevalier de Cressy, was obliged, in order to visit her, to scale a terrace upon which a window opened, which conducted to the sleeping-room of his mistress. He was generally accompanied in these nocturnal expeditions by his valet, a good-looking youth, who, disliking a state of idle-

ness, had contrived to insinuate himself into the good graces of the lady's maid. The valet, during his master's stay with madam, had likewise ascended the terrace, and penetrated, by the aid of another window, into the chamber where reposed the object of his tender love. All this was accomplished with as little noise as possible, in order to prevent the mischance of awakening the Marquis de l'Hôpital, who was quietly asleep in an adjoining room.

One clear moonlight night, at the very instant when M. de Cressy was about to step out of the window in order to return to his own apartment, a terrible crash of broken glass was heard. The terrified Chevalier sought the aid of his ladder, but it had disappeared. Not knowing what to do, the Chevalier returned to Madame de l'Hôpital, who, seized with terror, had only just time to conceal him in her chamber, when the Marquis opened his window to ascertain the cause of all this confusion. In an instant the alarm spread, and heads were popped out of the different windows of the castle, each vieing with the other in vociferating, "Thieves! thieves! murder! fire!"

The unfortunate author of all this disturbance was the unlucky valet, who, in his over eagerness to reach his Dulcinea, had attempted to climb his ladder so nimbly that it fell down, and, striking against the windows of a room near which he had fixed it, had broken several panes of glass. The poor valet never stopped to replace the ladder; but, terrified as well as hurt by his rapid descent, scrambled off as well as he could, abandoning his master in his present critical situation.

The ladder thrown down in the courtyard was abundant proof that some audacious attempt had been made upon the lives and safety of the inhabitants of the castle; and the general determination was to catch the thieves, for it was presumed, as no outlet for their escape was discernible, that they must be concealed within its walls. The servants, with their master at their head, were speedily assembled for the purpose, when the absence of the Chevalier de Cressy was observed. Where could he be? was the general wonder.

Was it possible that, amidst the universal uproar with which the castle had resounded, he had slept so soundly as to be yet unconscious of all this bustle? An over-officious friend was upon the point of going to his chamber to ascertain the cause of his absenting himself at such a moment, when Madame de l'Hôpital sent to request her husband to come to her immediately. "Sir," said she, when they were alone, "the disturbance which has thus broken our rest is not the work of thieves, but originates in the shameless licentiousness of a man unworthy of his name and the rank he occupies. The Chevalier de Cressy, forgetful of his being your guest, and of respecting the honour of all beneath your roof, has dared to carry on a base intrigue with my woman, in whose apartment you will find him at this very minute. A conduct so profligate and insulting fills me with an indignation in which I think that you, sir, after what you have heard, cannot but partake."

The Marquis de l'Hôpital, who did not see the thing in the same serious light, sought to appease the virtuous indignation of his lady, and went himself to release the Chevalier from his place of concealment, leading him through his own apartment to join the crowd of armed servants, who, as may be supposed, were unable to detect the supposed invaders of their repose.

On the following morning the Chevalier, as agreed upon, wrote a penitential letter to the Marchioness, entreating her pardon for his improper attentions to her servant, whom she affected to dismiss with every mark of gravest displeasure. The weeping Abigail threw herself at the feet of her mistress; and the compassionate Marquis (before whom the scene was enacted), touched with pity, implored his lady to receive the afflicted and penitent Javotte once more into her service. His solicitations were at length acceded to; and Javotte received a hundred louis as the price of her silence, and found it a sufficient compensation for the bad opinion the Marquis entertained of her virtue.

The second trick the Marchioness played her husband was not less amusing.

The Chevalier de Cressy and herself could not meet so frequently as they both desired; and whilst suffering under the void occasioned by his absence, chance threw in her way a young relation of her husband's, a youth of about eighteen, as beautiful as Love and as daring as that god. They were then in the country during the fine days of summer, and both time and place were favourable to the prosecution of their growing passion. One day Madame de l'Hôpital and her cousin were sauntering about the park, heedless of the approaching dinner-hour and equally deaf to the sound of the dinner-bell, which rang its accustomed peal in vain for them whose ears were occupied in listening to sweeter sounds. At length the master of the house, alarmed at the protracted absence of his wife and friend, went himself, attended by many guests assembled at his house, in search of the stray ones; the servants likewise received orders to disperse themselves over the grounds in different directions; and Madame de l'Hôpital and her companion were only aroused to a recollection of the flight of time by hearing their names loudly shouted by a dozen different voices. Fortunately they were just in time to separate in opposite paths, and thus to enter the castle without any suspicion being excited of their having been so recently in each other's company. The Marquis angrily remonstrated with his lady for having obliged him to send in search of her, and she excused herself by protesting that she had not heard the dinner-bell. The Marquis replied that the thing was impossible; and, after some angry discussion, the matter rested there.

A few days after this the Marchioness, with her husband and cousin, were rambling over the grounds, when they found themselves at the entrance of a hermitage, where Madame de l'Hôpital had told the Marquis she had sat down to rest herself on the day of her failing to attend at the dinner-hour. M. de l'Hôpital resumed the dispute by protesting that from this situation the dinner-bell might easily be heard. The lady continued firm in protesting it could not; till at last, feigning extreme anger, she exclaimed, "Well, then, sir,

since you refuse to believe *my* assertion, go yourself and ring the bell as loudly as you please; your cousin will remain here with me and determine if it be possible to distinguish the sound from here." The unsuspecting Marquis set off in the height of his zeal to convince his wife, and, arrived at the turret where the bell was placed, began ringing it with all his might and main, leaving the lovers the undisturbed opportunity they were not slow in taking advantage of. When the Marquis had ceased his chimes, the loving pair went to meet him.

"Well, my good cousin," enquired he, as they approached, "which of us was right? Could you hear it or not?"

"Yourself, most assuredly," replied the young man, not without a slight blush. "I can assure you that both madam and myself heard the bell the whole time you were ringing it."

"There, I told you so; I told you so," cried the delighted husband, triumphantly rubbing his hands.

I thought when this lively and piquant adventure was related to me that it was well worthy of being immortalised by the pen of a La Fontaine. The Marchioness gave these anecdotes with a grace and talent peculiarly her own; and I sometimes imagined that some of the many she favoured us with had, perhaps, taken place in a more recent period than that she assigned to them, and that, in order to divert our suspicions as to who were the real actors, she frequently substituted the *past* for what should have been with more correctness the *present* tense. With manners so calculated to win, she could not fail being a delightful companion, although in my heart I could not help giving the preference to the society of the Maréchale de Mirepoix.

Besides, the preference evinced by this lady in so generously separating herself from all her family in order to attach herself to me was not without its full value in my eyes. I knew myself to be generally disliked by her brother and sister-in-law, the Prince and Princesse de Beauvau, the latter of whom was the concealed mistress of the Duc de Choiseul, over whom she exercised an equal empire with the

Duchesse de Grammont, and I was every day the object of some fresh attack on their part. I used sometimes to complain of this to the Maréchale. "My dear friend," she would reply, "I am sorry, but cannot help it. In the midst of times such as we live in, and in such a Court, too, the Prince de Beauvau aspires to be a noble Roman, and would fain be at least the Cato of his country. When I recommend to him a greater degree of prudence, he talks to me of virtue, as though at Versailles duty did not consist in implicit obedience to the wishes of our Royal master; either obedience or absence from Court is the golden rule laid down, from which none dare deviate. As to my sister-in-law, she likewise aims at the heroic, although her models are formed from another school—in fact, she has pored over the romances of Cyrus, Cassander and Clœlia till she is half-bewildered, and holds forth upon the virtues of these famous heroines till I am frequently upon the point of exclaiming, 'Ah! my dear, it is all very fine, but Clœlia and Mandane would not have shared their bed with the Duc de Choiseul.'"

By these lively sallies the Maréchale succeeded in diverting my anger from her relations, and I generally forgot my resentment in a hearty fit of laughter, brought on by her sprightly conversation. I found myself every day becoming more attached to her, and her presence helped to console me for the many vexations I continually encountered.

The greatest unpleasantness I encountered was occasioned by the capricious behaviour of the Princesses, who sometimes received me with pleasure and at other times evinced a disposition to annoy me in every possible way, according as it suited the whims and wishes of those about them. The following may serve as an instance of their versatility:

The Prince de Condé having announced his intention of giving a grand fête at Chantilly, the Princesses declared they would not be present if I were there. The Prince de Condé, in spite of his claims to the character of a great man, was, nevertheless, one of the most subtle courtiers; and as soon as he was informed of the Princesses' inten-

tion, he came, without any ceremony, to explain the matter to me. This was the first visit he had honoured me with. "Madam," said he, "I had flattered myself you would have embellished Chantilly with your presence; but the beauties of the Court, too justly alarmed at the idea of being eclipsed by your dazzling charms, have so successfully manœuvred that they have prevailed upon the Royal daughters of our august monarch to declare that the beauty of their attending nymphs shall not be effaced by yours. You have too much good sense to see the affair in any but its true light; and the disappointment your absence will inflict on me would be an endurance too cruel did I not seek to pacify my anxious wishes on the subject by obtaining your promise to pay me a visit when the King next honours Chantilly with his presence."

I felt deeply flattered by the invitation. The Prince continued to pay me several elegant and gallant compliments; and I was, upon the whole, charmed with our interview. However, the King was highly displeased with his daughters' proceedings. "I have a great inclination," said he, "to forbid their going to Chantilly at all. Upon my word, if I were to listen to them they would fain make of me the same puppet they allow themselves to become in the hands of the greatest simpleton who will take the trouble of leading them."

I endeavoured to appease his anger by reminding him that he could not expect perfection from his daughters; and that, forced as they were to hear me continually ill-spoken of by my enemies, it was next to impossible they should be able to prevent themselves from adopting the opinions of those around them. "And that," said he, "is what I principally find fault with. What have they to do with aping the tone of those about them? and what point of their duty teaches them to detest those whom I love? I will take care to let them know my displeasure."

All my endeavours were in vain; I could obtain no change of his purpose. He summoned the Bishop of Senlis, and spoke to him in a manner that plainly evinced his in-

tention of making him responsible for the actions of the Princesses. Poor M. de Roquelaure called all the saints in paradise to witness his innocence.

"Silence, sir!" exclaimed the King, "I am perfectly certain this affair has not gone on without your knowledge and probable participation. I know you well for a person devoted to the ladies, as a gay, gallant gentleman need be. I know likewise that you expend the revenues of your bishopric and livings upon the prettiest girls of Paris; thus I can hardly suppose you would have counselled my daughters' conduct. No, I blame those wicked and vindictive scandal-mongers, whose age is their only protection, and those intriguing men who beset my daughters' ears."

"Sire," protested the trembling Bishop, "I entreat of you to believe I am innocent of the whole affair."

"Sir," interrupted the King, "I know well that you are as good a courtier as a prelate, but still I believe you merely ape your betters; and, far from entertaining any personal dislike to the Comtesse du Barri, you would not object to receive either the archbishopric of Albi or Sens from her hands were they in her power to bestow."

The conversation went on in this style for more than half an hour. The King, who had amused himself highly at the terror of the Bishop, left off in excellent humour. This interview had not been productive of equal amusement to M. de Roquelaure, whose self-love had been deeply humbled by the way in which the King had spoken. No sooner did he feel himself at liberty than he hastened to communicate to the Princesses the violent displeasure they had excited; and these ladies, so brave and daring whilst their father appeared to offer no show of authority or anger, durst proceed no further when they heard of his seriously disapproving of it, and they felt the inconsistency of their conduct in first admitting me into their presence and then refusing to meet me at any other place. The consequence of their deliberation upon the subject was to depute the Bishop of Senlis to call upon me. This accommodating prelate discharged his mission with the utmost amenity, presenting me with the united compliments

of the Royal sisters, who all joined in requesting the pleasure of meeting me at Chantilly. Had not the Prince de Condé held out the flattering prospect of giving me a fête wholly to myself, in all probability I should have profited by their invitation; but, knowing of the secret intention of the Prince, I returned for answer that "it was sufficiently flattering and gratifying to me to find that I still preserved any portion of the Princesses' kind favour, but that I was abundantly honoured by the intimation of my presence being agreeable. Nevertheless, as I had good authority for conjecturing that it might not be equally so to many of the ladies of their Court, I should abstain from giving offence to anyone by my presence."

"Ah, madam," cried M. de Roquelaure, "I entreat of you not to insist upon my carrying the latter part of this message to the Princesses; they would be so much grieved."

"Well, then, sir," said I, "tell them that I am indisposed, and that the state of my health will detain me at Versailles."

"That, indeed," said he, "is a more respectful message; and, further, I would venture to ask of your goodness that, since it is not your pleasure to honour Chantilly with your presence, you will have the kindness to mention in the proper quarter that, far from my Royal ladies opposing any obstacle to your going, they would have been much delighted with your presence there."

"Be assured, sir," answered I, "that I shall ever feel proud and honoured by the Princesses' notice; and I will take care that the faithful account of all their gracious condescension shall be faithfully and loudly reported."

The Bishop departed much pleased with the success of his negotiation, and, above all, with the agreeable turn the affair had taken.

When I next saw the King I said to him, "Your daughters, Sire, are as amiable as you would have them; they have been informed that some evil-disposed persons have asserted that they had prohibited my being of the party to Chantilly; and, in order to testify how differently they were disposed towards me, they despatched the Bishop of Senlis."

"A most fit person to be entrusted with such a com-

mission," replied the King; "for I have, in every instance, endeavoured to justify the wishes of this holy pillar of the Church—this worthy prelate with his double-faced politeness—towards those whom he openly compliments and reviles in private just as his interests may require it. Well! and what did you say to him?"

"That I most humbly thanked the Princesses, but that the state of my health did not permit of my visiting Chantilly for the present."

"That is all very well," answered Louis XV.; "you have framed your excuse with much generosity, which I greatly fear will meet with a very different return; for if you do not accompany me to Chantilly the report circulated will be that the Princesses have forbidden you their presence, which my dearly-beloved daughters, whose characters I fully understand, will neither affirm nor deny before the public, whilst in private they will vow that they prohibited you from following them—always excepting Madame Louise, who is an angel upon earth, as she will most assuredly be one day in heaven, where I trust her prayers for me and mine will be heard."

I did not at the time pay any particular attention to the latter part of the King's discourse, for, indeed, the beginning was far more interesting to me; but when I afterwards learnt that Madame Louise had quitted the grandeurs of Versailles for the gloom and austerity of a convent, I recollected it, and easily comprehended that it was spoken in allusion to an event which took place some time afterwards, and of which I shall speak in its proper place. However, the King's prediction was exactly verified, and the report in general circulation was that the Princesses had declared their intention of not going to Chantilly; it was further rumoured that I was there, but in a private and concealed manner. This is wholly untrue; the King would never have permitted such a humiliation, nor do I believe I should have submitted to it had he even desired it.

CHAPTER XXVII

Unpublished letter of Louis XV.—Madame du Barri's cousin, M. de Maupeou—The Comtesse du Barri saves the life of a young girl seduced by the arts of the curé of her village—She obtains the pardon of the Comte and Comtesse de Louerne—The King presents her with Lucienne—A second meeting with the youthful prophet—His further predictions—He is sought for—His mysterious letter to the Countess.

THE King sought to recompense me for his absence at Chantilly by writing a most delightful letter, which I will subjoin for your gratification. To me it was of so much the greater value for the reason that, having its Royal writer's permission to show it, it became the first death-blow I aimed at the cabal against me. The King possessed a much greater portion of wit and talent than the weakness and timidity of his character permitted to appear.

"How does my sweet friend contrive to bear our tedious separation? Is she happy and amused? In that case I can only say she has greatly the advantage over him who now addresses her. No, my lovely Countess, I am dragging on a tedious and uninteresting existence, spite of the great and earnest endeavours of my good cousin and host to provide for my enjoying the gaiety by which I am surrounded; but, alas! amidst the many faces with which his mansion is thronged, that one which is dearest to me is wanting, and all becomes a blank in my eyes, and I yawn with irrepressible weariness in the midst of the glittering pageants given to honour my arrival; and you may rest assured that I shall hail with delight the termination of a visit which seems already to have swelled the period of our separation into ages. I will not attempt to conceal from you that those who have good cause to envy your supreme dominion over my heart have set every scheme in action to lead me even into a emporary oblivion of you; but their attempts are as vain as their impotent rivalry, and need cause no uneasiness to you, my beloved friend. I frequently smile at the vast pains and precautions of which my 'sacred person' is the object, and I am *continually* encountering *by chance* some of these fair ladies who would fain usurp your place, sometimes 'bedecked with jewels rare,' and sometimes, as Racine says:

'dans le simple appareil
D'une beauté, qu'on vient d'arracher au sommeil.'

Madame de Grammont, for instance, takes an infinity of trouble respecting my choice of your successor, which she is resolved shall be either

herself or one of her choosing. I protest to you that I find all these plots and counterplots very amusing; and can only say that my daughters, who are completely duped by those practising them, must be more easily deceived than I had imagined possible. Nor can I quite deny that I feel a half-mischievous delight in reducing to despair—

'ce peuple de rivales
Qui toutes, disputant, d'un si grand intérêt,
Des yeux d'Assuérus attendent leur arrêt.'

Assuérus (which, of course, means me) keeps one perpetual reply to all their high-sounding praises and eulogiums of such or such a lady: 'She is well enough, certainly; but the Comtesse du Barri excels her a hundred-fold.' Then follow such shrugs, such contortions of countenance, and such vain efforts to repress the rage of disappointed vanity and ambition, that I am nearly ready to die with laughter.

"*A propos* of dying: I inquired the number of deaths which took place at Chantilly last week. 'Only four!' they say. Now I think that number quite sufficient for the size of the place. I walked as far as the village cemetery, which is large and judiciously placed. I must tell you that one of my footmen has gone to that last journey from which none return. He was a tall, presuming sort of fellow, remarkable for nothing but his impertinence and the continual scrapes he was for ever getting into amongst the *soubrettes*. However, he met with his death in some sudden brawl. My people sought to conceal this piece of intelligence from me; but having once heard of it, I despatched Flamarens to ascertain in what corner of the cemetery he had been interred.

"The Duc de Tresmes talks much of you, and boasts greatly of the honour of your friendship. He has dubbed himself your *sapajou*. This is not amiss for a peer of France; and what is still more gratifying, he has assumed a title which, I believe, no one in the kingdom will attempt to dispute his incontestable claim to call his own. Villeroi is all impatience to return to Versailles. The Ducs de Richelieu and d'Aiguillon, both uncle and nephew, commend themselves to your kind recollection. Thus you see you may reckon upon a few devoted and attached friends, even without him whose hand is busily tracing these lines; and he, I can promise you, is inferior to none in the truest love and affection for you.

"Those ladies of whom I would have you be most on your guard are Mesdames de C——, de B——, de P——, de G——. They really throw themselves in my way, till I can call them nothing but fools for their pains. But I must do them the justice to say that they are less ambitious than you, and so that they could rob you of your place would care very little whether I could offer them my heart with the other honours to which they aspire; in fact, 'tis time we were together again, for the people here seem determined to profit by my stay amongst them. My cousin entertains us magnificently, and pleasure succeeds pleasure in a continual round of enchantment. He tells me he has others still more charming in store against the time when you will honour him with your presence. Am I right in promising that this will be ere very long? Adieu. What a long letter have I written you. I will now conclude by bestowing an imaginary kiss on that lovely face, which must satisfy me till I have the felicity of seeing you again.

"And now, my dear friend and fairest Countess, I will end my lengthened epistle by praying God to have you ever in His holy care and keeping."

The receipt of this letter afforded me the liveliest pleasure, and I wrote to the King regularly every night and morning. I might here introduce a specimen of my own epistolary style, but I will not; for, although the whimsical and extravagant things my pen gave utterance to were exactly to the King's taste, they might surprise you; but my Royal correspondent loved the wild and bizarre turn of my expressions, and I fulfilled his wishes. Perhaps it was not the only instance in which I gratified his inclination.

My cousin, the Chancellor of France, had remained to keep me company instead of joining the party at Chantilly. *My cousin*, say you, and by what right or title could M. de Maupeou become such? I will tell you. First of all, he only aspired to the honour of relationship; but afterwards, turning over the archives of his family, he found the most incontestable proofs of his belonging to the ancient families of Barri; and, full of joy, he hurried to me, unrolling at my feet his genealogical tree, to the great amusement of Comte Jean and my sister-in-law, who, after a long examination, declared that he was justly entitled to the appellation of first cousin. From that period he always addressed me as *cousin*, which I flattered him by returning whenever I was in the humour.

About this period I was the happy instrument in saving from death a young girl whose judges (as will be seen) were about to sentence her to be hanged without fully understanding whether she was innocent or guilty. This unfortunate creature was a young and pretty country girl, whose worthy pastor, the curé of Liancourt, had availed himself of the influence he possessed, and of the advantages of his authority over the poor creature's mind, to seduce her from the paths of virtue. Unfortunately, just at the time when she expected to produce a living witness of their amour, and when she trusted to the cares of the curé to procure for her those comforts her unfortunate situation required, the author of her shame was suddenly carried off by a violent death, and the wretched girl, either through ignorance or the shame of having listened to the illicit passion of a priest, neglected to make any of those

formal declarations required by the law, and gave birth to a dead infant. The justice of the village, informed of her fault, caused her to be arrested, and recorded against her sentence of death, a decision which was afterwards approved by Parliament.

The poor girl was in this extremity when, happily for her, M. de Mandeville, a worthy man from either Normandy or Picardy, who had served in the Black Musketeers, resolved upon attempting the revocation of the severe sentence which had been passed upon her, by addressing the King through my mediation. He accordingly followed me to Marly, where I then was, and lost no time in forwarding to me the following note:

"MADAM,—Beauty has ever been found the inseparable companion of goodness; to yours I would appeal to obtain the favour of an immediate audience. My reasons for requesting it are not to solicit either place or pension, but to save the life of an erring creature whose crime has been that of ignorance. I await your reply with the most lively impatience, and have the honour to remain," &c., &c.

This note puzzled me excessively. However, I gave orders for the immediate introduction of M. de Mandeville, whose appearance was even more prepossessing than his note. He looked and spoke like an honourable man, endowed with that sensibility so precious and so rare. He put into my hands the petition, whilst he explained to me the particulars relative to it, and I instantly wrote to the Chancellor the following note, of which a thousand copies were taken in the course of the day. Although it has been many times in print, I shall offer no apologies for again submitting it to your perusal:

"MONSIEUR LE CHANCELIER,—I do not profess to understand your laws, but they seem to me as unjust as barbarous. They are contrary to both reason and humanity if they put to death an unfortunate female for giving birth to a still-born child without having previously disclosed her situation to anyone; and yet, according to the memorial annexed to this, the petitioner is so circumstanced. Here is an unhappy girl about to pay with the forfeit of her life for her ignorance of such a law, or because the modesty and even shame attendant upon her disgraced condition prevented her conforming to it. I appeal to your sense of justice. The wretched girl concerning whom I write is a fit object for the exercise of your leniency, and I venture to assure myself that you will at least effect the commutation of her punishment. Your own kind feelings will dictate all I would ask further for her.—I am," &c., &c.

I felt very certain that, from the manner in which I had expressed myself, the consent of M. de Maupeou was certain. I therefore said to my visitor, the handsome musketeer, "And now, sir, the noble work of charity in which you have associated me must be completed. Go yourself and see the Chancellor, tell him you come from me, and do not quit him till you obtain the reply I have solicited."

M. de Mandeville loaded me with thanks and praises, which I did not really merit, because in the present instance I acted as much from the wish to gratify my own feelings as his. My name and my letter were talismans before which all doors flew open, and he reached without difficulty the presence of the chief administrator of justice, who, having read the memorial and the note I had affixed to it, said, "That is sufficient, sir. Have the goodness to assure Madame la Comtesse du Barri, my cousin, that the reprieve she desires is already granted; and as my fair relation appears to fear trusting implicitly to my personal friendship and humanity, I will set her mind at rest by putting you in possession of the legal forms requisite for the prisoner."

He immediately issued the necessary orders for suspending the execution of the sentence, which M. de Mandeville lost no time in communicating to the poor girl, who, a very few days afterwards, received a full pardon, and was thus in a manner snatched from an unmerited and ignominious death. The musketeer requested permission to present my *protégée* to my notice. She really was a very pretty girl. Her feelings overpowered her on her attempting to throw herself at my feet, and she fainted. I soon restored her to consciousness by the aid of restoratives, while my people stood staring without attempting to offer any aid; and then, to send her away perfectly happy and cheerful, I slipped into the pocket of her apron a rouleau of fifty louis which the King had given me for her use. And here I must remark that this Prince, avaricious as he naturally was, was yet always ready to perform a good action, and, indeed, in this respect, he possessed many excellent qualities to which no one has ever yet done justice.

When I next saw the Chancellor he said, "Do you know, my fair cousin, that if I wished to set you and the Parliament quarrelling together I need only just whisper in what manner you treat our laws."

"Your laws," exclaimed I, "are barbarous edicts, made rather for tigers than for men. Your punishments are atrocious, nor do I see their application to correct a single malefactor; particularly in the case of this young girl it is abominable, and if the King would listen to me such savage edicts should not long remain unrepealed."

"That may do very well," replied M. de Maupeou, "some time hence, but not just now; ere our penal code can be revised we must have magistrates more supple than those who now dispute our slightest innovation; and if, by the grace of God, we can manage to make a clear house of them, why we may confidently anticipate the noblest results."

By these and similar insinuations the Chancellor bespoke that aid and assistance which I afterwards so largely rendered him when he commenced the ruin of Parliaments.

Upon another occasion my credit and influence were employed with equal success. The objects of my present exertions were the Comte and Comtesse de Louerne. Both husband and wife were deeply loaded with debts, a thing common enough with the nobility of the time. These debts they never paid, another thing by no means unusual. Their creditors, whose flinty hearts were but little moved by the considerations of their rank and high blood, sent officers to enforce payment, when the Louernes opposed them with positive force and violence, and the laws, thus outraged, condemned them to suffer death. In vain did persons of the highest rank in the kingdom intercede in their behalf, imploring the Chancellor to interpose with the King. Although deaf to every other entreaty, he instantly granted a reprieve at my solicitation, declaring I was the only person who could have effected so much in behalf of the distressed culprits, as well as being the only source through which the King's mercy could be obtained.

Immediately upon this notification I was waited upon by

the Comtesse de Moyau, their daughter, and the Baronne d'Heldorf, their daughter-in-law. Both these ladies came to me in the deepest sorrow, and I mingled my sighs and tears with those they so plentifully shed. But this was rendering poor service, and if I desired to aid their cause it was requisite I should speak to the King, who was little disposed to show any indulgence in such cases, and was never known to pass over any attempts on the part of the nobility to resist the laws. He looked with horror on every prospect of the return of those times which he hoped and believed were past and gone never to return. I well knew his sentiments on the subject, and yet, trusting to my great influence over his mind, I did not despair of success; besides, Chon, my sister-in-law, was constantly reminding me that people of a certain rank should support one another, and that now was the time or never. I therefore resolved upon befriending the daughters of the Comte de Louerne to the utmost of my power, and for that purpose I placed them both in a corner of the drawing-room so as to catch the King's eye as he entered. He observed them, and enquired who those two ladies were. "Sire," replied I, "they are the heart-broken daughters of the Comte and Comtesse de Louerne, who implore the clemency of Your Majesty to save the lives of the authors of their being."

"Ah, madam," returned he, "you know I can do nothing against the law which they have offended."

At these cruel words the two young ladies threw themselves at his feet, exclaiming, "Pardon, pardon, Sire; in the name of Heaven and your illustrious ancestors."

"Rise, ladies," said the King; "I would willingly serve you, but I have not the power."

"No, Sire," cried I, "you must not, you cannot, refuse our united prayers; and I here vow to remain kneeling at your feet till your lips shall pronounce the word which shall restore life and happiness to so many afflicted hearts."

"Madam," said the King, although in a tone less firm, "you force me to do what my principles condemn; but since it must be so, I yield, and only rejoice that the first personal

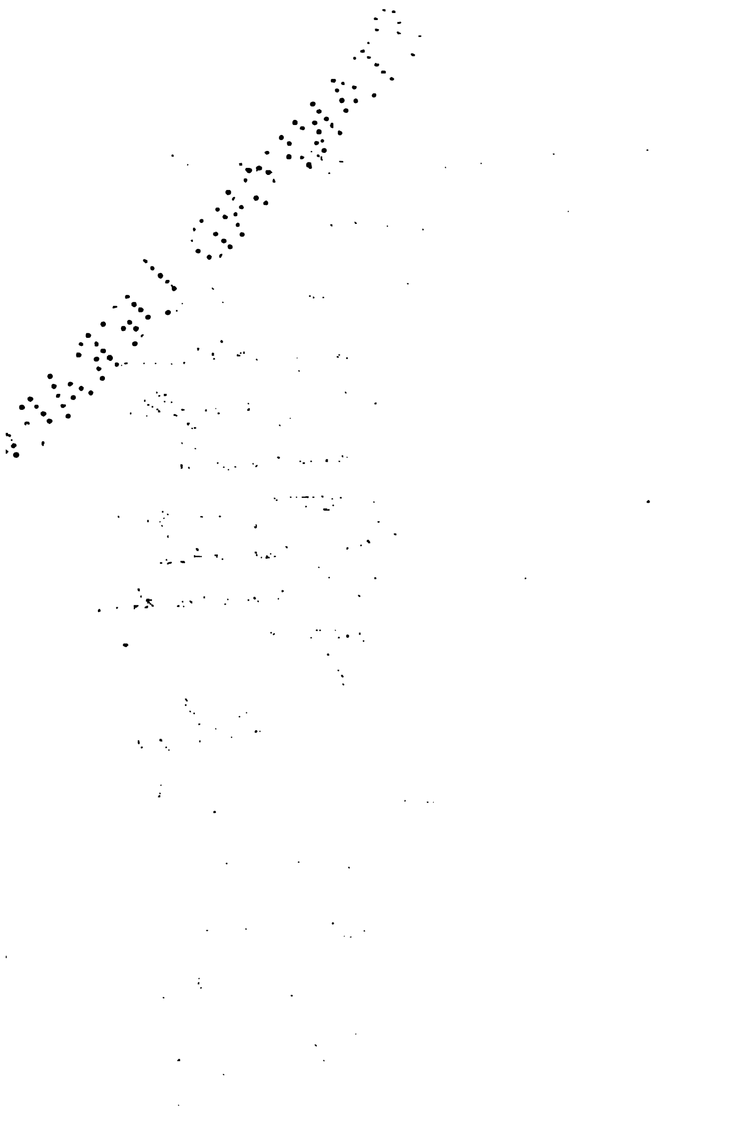
favour you request of me is to perform an act of beneficence. Ladies," added he, turning towards the Comtesse de Moyau and her sister-in-law, "you owe the lives of your parents to the generous mediation of the Comtesse du Barri."

The joy of the Louernes was only equalled by the base calumny of my enemies, who accused me of having prepared this scene, which was got up by the King and myself to produce effect and excite popularity. Could such disgusting falsehoods have entered into the minds of any but the most depraved? Yet those who continually watched and misrepresented my least action appeared anxious to deprive me of even the taste for, as well as the power of, doing good. This took place at Choisy, which we very shortly after quitted for Compiègne, where I passed my time very agreeably. The King would not suffer either the Duchesse de Grammont or the Comtesses d'Egmont and de Brienne to accompany us upon this excursion. It has likewise been asserted that neither the Duchesse de Grammont nor the Princesse de Beauvau were present during the King's first visit to Chantilly. That is not correct; it was at the second that they were forbidden by Louis to join the party. Those who fabricated such accounts in all probability derived their information from either the stable or the kitchen, which was all they knew of the Court of Louis XV.

During my abode at Compiègne I dined several times at the house of my brother-in-law, Cléon du Barri, then a captain in the Regiment de Beauce, who was with a detachment quartered in the neighbourhood of the Castle, and he, with the rest of his brother officers, vied in endeavours to please and amuse me. They gave fêtes in honour of me, were perpetually devising fresh schemes to render the place agreeable to me, and in that they perfectly succeeded, for I quitted Compiègne with no other regret than that my stay there was at an end.

The King appeared each day more and more solicitous to render me happy, and even anticipated any wishes I might form. Amongst other marks of his favour he bestowed upon me the splendid Pavillon de Lucienne, sold by

Requisition signed by Madame du Barri for the
payment of 1,474 livres to Louis Couvreur
for furnishings of the pavilion at
Lucienne and his receipt
for the amount



the Duc de Penthièvre after the death of his son, the Prince de Lamballe. You know this charming spot, which both nature and art have so liberally contributed to adorn. I have converted it into the most perfect and delightful habitation in which a mortal could desire to end her days. Nevertheless, this hope of passing my life tranquilly and happily within its sheltering bosom will prove but fallacious, if I may credit a prediction which has been verified already in part. You doubtless remember the young man who so obstinately pursued me to announce the high destiny to which I should attain ere I had for one moment contemplated such an elevation. Well, you will scarcely credit me when I declare that all recollection of him had entirely escaped me; but, in truth, the constant vortex of a Court life leaves no time for the recollection of the past, and fills our minds with no other ideas but to provide for the present and occasionally to glance at the future.

However, I thought no more of my young prophet, when one Sunday, after my return to Versailles from Compiègne, I attended Mass at the Castle. All at once I caught a glimpse of my mysterious acquaintance, leaning his back against the wall behind the altar. He was examining my countenance with a deep and fixed attention. You may picture to yourself my astonishment and surprise at recognising in this place the person who had so long ago foretold my brilliant destiny. The colour rushed to my cheeks, and he could distinctly observe how much I was agitated by his presence, and his beautiful countenance was lit up with a pleasant smile, after which he gracefully waved his hand round his head as though he would say, "Are you not Queen of France?" This gesture excited my astonishment still further. However, I returned his mute enquiry by a slight inclination of the head, intended to say, "You are right." In a moment a sort of cloud seemed to cover my eyes. So soon as I could recover from the sudden dimness which obscured my vision, I endeavoured to bend my looks in an opposite direction, for so greatly was I the point of general observation that I feared to awaken suspicion by

an indiscreet attention to one particular person or place. When, however, after some little time had elapsed, I ventured to turn my eyes again to the spot where the young man had been standing, he had disappeared.

I was unable to recover my astonishment at the whole affair, and the suddenness of his departure inspired me with a lively desire to know more of him—whether he were man or demon. I mentioned it to Chon the same day, who, having listened to me with extreme attention, said, "Upon my word, this is a most marvellous event in your history. Why do you not mention the fact to M. de Sartines?"

"Because it appears to me folly to disturb or annoy a person who has given me no offence; and were I to put him into the hands of the police I might possibly find reason to repent having acted so. On the other hand, I would give any sum of money for one more interview with this wonderful person."

There the conversation ended; but my sister-in-law, by an unpardonable curiosity she ought not to have indulged in, wrote, unknown to me, to the Lieutenant of Police, entreating him to use the most active measures to trace out the object of my curiosity. M. de Sartines, delighted at having an opportunity of proving to me and mine his skill and zeal, turned all his bloodhounds loose upon the track of this unfortunate being. During these proceedings I received a letter, sealed with five black seals, bearing the impression of a death's-head. I thought at first that it was to notify the decease of some friend, and regarded the style as gloomy as it was strange; but, upon opening it, I found it to contain the following words:

"MADAME LA COMTESSE,—I am perfectly aware that the hot pursuit made after me in your name is without your knowledge or sanction: those sent in search of me have spared no pains nor trouble to ascertain my name and abode. My abode! Let all, as they value themselves, avoid meeting me there; for, when they enter it, it will be never to quit it again. Who am I? That can only be known when this life has been exchanged for another. I charge you, madam, to command the lieutenant, M. de Sartines, to cease his researches after me; they would be fruitless, and might only compromise your safety. Remember, I predicted your good

fortune; was I not correct in it? I have also foretold reverses; I am equally correct in them also. You will see me twice more; and should I unfortunately cross your path a third time, prepare to bid adieu to the light of heaven and the pleasures of this world."

It is impossible to convey an idea of the excessive terror with which I was filled upon the perusal of this letter. I summoned my sister-in-law, and complained of the harshness of conduct thus adopted against my pleasure. Chon was equally alarmed, and confessed to me what she had done in asking the aid of M. de Sartines; at the same time, she was the first to declare that it was requisite to put an end to all further search, which, in one shape or other, might bring on the most fatal consequences. I therefore wrote myself to M. de Sartines, thanking him for his exertions, but saying that my sister-in-law and myself had learned from the lips of the mysterious stranger all we were desirous of knowing, and that any further researches being unpleasant to him would be equally disagreeable to me. M. de Sartines obeyed my request; and from that period till the death of the King I heard no more of this singular personage.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Extraordinary anecdote of Louis XIV. and Madame de Maintenon—The Comtesse du Barri at Chantilly—Opinion of the King and the Comte de la Marche respecting the "Iron Mask"—Madame du Barri visits Madame de Lagarde.

My acquaintance with the singular being I was speaking of in the last chapter did not end here, as you will find in the sequel. I will now give you an account of an equally strange affair, in nearly the same words as Louis XV. himself related it to me. Although strongly recommended by my sister-in-law and M. de Sartines to conceal the whole story of my mysterious friend from the King, yet, unaccustomed to the prudent reserve which obtains at Court, I, one fine evening, in order to fill up a long blank in the conversation, related the story from beginning to end. His Majesty listened with attention till I had concluded. "This is, indeed," said he, "a most singular history, and I think you have acted very wisely in putting an end to all interference on the part of the police; for in such cases you frequently run great risks to procure a trifling gratification. We have seen something of the same sort in our family."

This discourse excited my curiosity, and I entreated of him to explain himself more fully. "I ought not to do so," replied he, "such transactions should be kept for ever concealed; but as more than half a century has elapsed since the event I allude to took place, I think I may venture to break the silence I have religiously observed until now. You are the only person to whom I have ever mentioned it, and I must bind you to the strictest secrecy."

This I faithfully promised, and so long as Louis XV. lived I kept my word.

"At the conclusion of the last century, during the month of September," resumed His Majesty, "my great-grandfather, Louis XIV., and Madame de Maintenon, formed the wish of consulting together some learned astrologer in order to ascertain whether the coming age would be productive of good or ill to them. As neither of them knew to whom to apply in order to attain their object, Madame de Maintenon was compelled to confide her wishes to her friend Madame de Montchevreuil, who readily engaged to find for her the person she required; for, despite the severity with which the law visited such practices, there was no scarcity of dealers in augury, who promised good or bad fortune in proportion to the payments they received.

"Whilst this lady was making diligent search after one perfectly competent to satisfy Madame de Maintenon, the latter, in conjunction with the King, notwithstanding the superiority of their minds, were greatly disturbed at the probable consequences of the step they meditated. Their desire to penetrate into futurity appeared to them as ridiculous as it was criminal; but their weaker feelings triumphed. The result of their deliberations was that, far from relinquishing their intention of searching the book of fate, they should spare neither pains nor trouble to attain their object; and to encourage each other, they reckoned upon their fingers the names of every person of their acquaintance, or even belonging to the Court, who had derived profit and advantage from the predictions of fortune-tellers.

"The minds of all at this period were still imbued with those superstitious feelings of which many of the most illustrious persons had given ample proof even in the preceding reign. We have become either more wicked or more sceptical, whichever you please to term it; but this is certain, that many of the things predicted were accomplished with an exact punctuality, which might serve to

overthrow the finest arguments of the greatest philosophers, and which has indeed destroyed many ingenious theories. Doubtless the hidden laws of Nature have reference to other beings than ourselves, and, beyond dispute, may be said to govern the creatures of an unknown world, as well as exercising control over poor mortals like us." After this short digression, of which I give you the precise meaning, the King continued as follows:

"On the following day Madame de Montchevreuil paid a visit to Madame de Maintenon, in which she declared that, upon mature reflection, she could not proceed with the commission she had undertaken—that it was tempting Providence, and had better be abandoned. This remonstrance had no effect upon Madame de Maintenon, who shielded herself from any necessity of retracting by repeating to herself that she pledged to join Louis XIV. in the undertaking, and it would never do for her to forfeit her character for firmness and good sense by now appearing trifling and capricious. However, she feigned a seeming compliance with the advice of Madame de Montchevreuil, whilst in reality her mind was resolved upon executing her project.

"There was in her household a female, who was not immediately one of her establishment, although generally ranking as such; one of those active, stirring persons who thrust themselves into a noble family under the equivocal title of half servant, half lady. This one had charge of all the necessary purchases of house linen, engaged the servants, kept watch over their conduct, procured for the Marchioness whatever particulars she might require upon any subject; and, in a word, took upon herself any piece of service by which she could more firmly plant herself in the family of her employers. She received no fixed wages, but their absence was abundantly compensated in the numerous rich presents that were continually made her. Her sleeping apartment in the Castle was always immediately adjoining that of Madame de Maintenon. A person of this description (as may be readily supposed) knew the world too well to find any difficulty in procuring a mere fortune-teller;

and as her discretion might be confidently relied on, it was resolved by her mistress to entrust her with the design.

"Two days after she had removed all difficulties by discovering an Italian priest, famed as the most skilful necromancer of his day; one who undertook to reveal the decrees of Fate to all those who should consult him as clearly and readily as though its leaves lay open as a book before his eyes. But this gifted person lived in the utmost dread of attracting the notice of Parliament, and exercised his art only under the strictest assurances of secrecy, in the most retired and secluded manner, with every precaution to prevent the possibility of a surprise.

"These conditions were too gratifying to Madame de Maintenon to cause much delay in subscribing to them; and it was finally arranged that the prophet and his new applicants should meet at a house in Sèvres, belonging to the Royal Family, then in the occupation of Madame Cerfol (the lady of whom mention has already been made). The Marchioness was to repair thither at one o'clock in the morning with a single friend. To have taken such a measure in open daylight would have been to proclaim their secret to all Paris. One person besides Madame de Cerfol was necessarily admitted into their confidence, and that was the Duc de Noailles, who was charged, by the King's express orders, to take every possible precaution to ensure their safety, as far as it could be done, without attracting public attention to so extraordinary an affair.

"At the hour appointed, Madame de Maintenon and the Duc de Noailles entered a carriage, which awaited them at one of the park gates, and were soon conveyed to Sèvres, whither the Italian priest had gone the preceding night. This wretched man had celebrated alone the sacrifice of the Mass, and had consecrated several wafers.

"Everything confirmed the opinion that the conjuror, up to the present moment, merely supposed himself sent for to satisfy the curiosity of some country nobleman and his lady, who were both anxious and eager to read their future fortune through his assistance. I can only suppose if he had been

in ignorance of the real rank of those who addressed him, the sight of the King must have quickly undeceived him, as the conclusion of the story proves he well knew to whom he spoke when he delivered his prediction. However this may have been, he was no sooner alone with the Marchioness than he commenced the necessary preparations for the performance of his sorceries and enchantments. He burned perfumes, offered prayers, and with loud invocations adjured the powers of hell to answer him; and in the midst of a wild and agitating sound which pervaded the whole building during the heavy swell of noises too dreadful to have arisen from mortal sources, and whilst a thousand visions were flitting to and fro, he drew the horoscope of the King and Madame de Maintenon. He promised Louis XIV. that he should succeed in all his undertakings; and that, on the very day on which he spoke the words (the 2nd of October), one of his children had been called to the inheritance of an immense fortune. Then, giving him a small packet wrapped in new parchment, 'The day in which you form the fatal resolution of acquainting yourself with the contents of this packet,' said he, 'will be the last of your prosperity; but if you desire to carry your good fortune to the highest pitch, be careful upon every great festival—that is to say, Easter, Whit Sunday, the Assumption, and Christmas—to plunge a pin into this talisman so that the point shall pass directly through it. Fail not to do this, and you will live perfectly happy.'

"The King accepted the fatal present, and swore upon the Gospel never to open the packet. He richly rewarded the priest, who from that period lived in a retreat so well concealed as to evade the most diligent researches of those who sought to discover it.

"News was received some time after that on the very 2nd of October, 1700, named by the priest, Charles II., King of Spain, had appointed in his will Philip of France, son of the Dauphin, his successor and heir, an inheritance truly immense, as the astrologer had foretold. You may well think how highly this realisation of the prediction inspired

the King with confidence as to the fulfilment of the remainder; and, on his part, he never failed upon any saint's day or other solemn festival to stick the mysterious pin in the talisman upon which so much depended.

"Nevertheless, despite all these observances, his undertakings did not invariably succeed, which astonished him greatly; when one day the great Bossuet, happening to be at Madame de Maintenon's, the conversation turned upon magic and sorcery, necromancers and their horrible profanations, and he expressed himself with so much force and energy that the King and Madame de Maintenon looked at each other without knowing what to say, and began for the first time to feel compunction for what they had done and to regret their imprudence. They talked of it much together, and at length resolved to reveal their crime to their confessors. The punishment imposed on the King by his spiritual adviser was that he should evince his contempt for the talismanic properties of the parchment packet by immediately opening it.

"Louis XIV. did not by any means admire this method of expiating his fault; and a sort of involuntary dread took possession of him as, in obedience to the command of his confessor, he went to procure the magic parcel, which he tore open in the presence of Madame de Maintenon and Father la Chaise. The packet contained nothing but a consecrated wafer, pierced through with as many pins as there had been saints' days since the King had received it. At the sight of this horrible sacrilege my great-grandfather was filled with deep remorse and consternation, from which it was a long time ere he recovered; and it was not until he had undergone many severe penances and fastings, and had caused numberless Masses to be said, that he felt himself at all relieved from the weight of his crime.

"But all this was only the commencement of the Divine vengeance, and those in the secret of this unfortunate affair remarked that this great monarch lost from that time as many male descendants in a direct line as he had stuck pins into the holy wafer."

Louis XV. here terminated this singular history, which struck my mind with a sort of religious terror. I strove by every possible effort to dissimulate, concealing from the King the emotions to which his narration had given rise. I contented myself with observing that, "after hearing his marvellous recital, I should only be more confirmed in my determination to leave my young prophet to the tranquillity he desired."

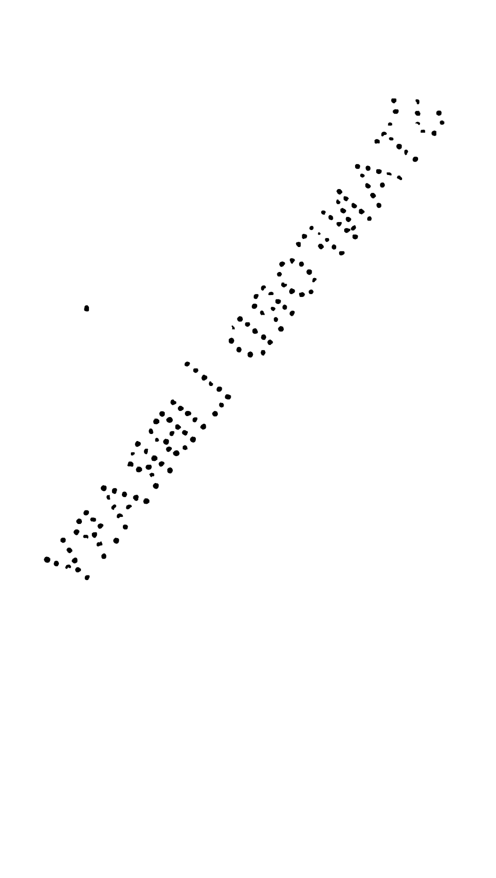
"It will be far best so," added Louis; "I know so many fatal results which have followed any indiscreet curiosity that I am persuaded you had much better leave such mysterious affairs to work out their own solution."

I promised to follow his advice, and we then conversed upon other subjects. Since then this anecdote has recurred to my memory; and, without wishing to impeach the sincerity of Louis XV., I have asked myself whether, by the opportune relation of this adventure, probably invented by himself, he did not seek to destroy the confidence I appeared to entertain in the predictions of my prophet. I say *invented*, because the King had a peculiar readiness and facility in composing these sort of wonderful tales, carefully noting down every circumstance which fell under his knowledge deviating from the ordinary course of things. He had a large collection of these legends, which he delighted in narrating; and this he did with an ease and grace of manner I have never seen equalled.

About this period the Prince de Condé, whose gallantry never failed, entreated the King to pay a second visit to Chantilly: and it was upon this occasion Louis erased from the list of Court ladies all those whose presence would be disagreeable to me during our stay at Chantilly. One scene of pleasure followed another, and one fête succeeded another. I accompanied His Majesty without ever quitting him; and if hitherto there had existed any doubts as to the sincerity of the King's attachment, the most sceptical person would now have been convinced of the fact. Louis XV. was never from my side, and appeared solely occupied in gratifying my slightest wish; the Princes of the Court carefully imitated

Louis XIV.

From an Engraving by Bourgeois



his example; and such a life as I then led was abundant compensation for all the pains and anxieties I had endured from the malice and jealousy of certain women, as well as the sarcastic bitterness of men who feared that my influence should destroy theirs.

I may with truth affirm that I received the honours and attentions due to a Queen. Verses and plays were written to convey some praise or compliment to me. The King testified the lively gratification it afforded him to see me thus an object of general solicitude, as well as of the most flattering distinction. His conduct towards the Prince de Condé became more gracious than it had ever been observed to be to the Princes of the Blood; for there existed a singular coolness in the Royal Family towards all the Princes of this branch. The King looked upon it as vastly inferior to his own, because it had been separated from the throne before the accession of Henry IV. to the crown; he even asserted that there was much to be said upon this subject, but prudence compels me to pass over the many histories and circumstances related by him to me of this brilliant portion of his noble race.

Neither the Prince de Condé, whom I knew well, nor the Prince de la Marche, entertained much regard for their relations; and they had always some spiteful story in store respecting the posterity of Louis XIII. There is one noted historical mystery which has never been properly cleared up.

On one occasion I was conversing with the Comte de la Marche upon the disputes concerning the Parliaments, and I expressed my fear that, if driven to desperate measures, the people would rise in open rebellion in favour of the magistracy. "They would be still more clamorous," replied he, "if they knew all I could tell them."

"And what do you know more than myself?" asked I. "Your Highness alarms me by speaking thus."

"Amongst events now passed and gone is one that would materially affect the public peace, if known."

"You must explain yourself, my lord," said I. He refused;

but I persisted in pressing the matter with so much earnestness that at last he said, in a low voice:

"Did you ever hear of the man who wore the iron mask?"

"Yes, certainly," replied I. "Who was he?"

"A great Prince, and a most unfortunate man."

"But who was he really?"

"In the eyes of the law the Crown of France should have been his; but, strictly speaking, he certainly had no claim."

The Comte de la Marche stopped here; and as I was not very deeply read in history I did not exactly comprehend the distinction he had just made. I had frequently heard talk of the "Iron Mask," whom people reported to be either allied to or sprung from the Royal Family, but all these particulars were confused in my memory. However, I was much struck with the conversation I had had with the Comte de la Marche; and when next the conversation fell on this mysterious personage I asked the Duc de Richelieu what he thought of him.

"Upon my honour," replied he, "I never could find out who he really was. Not that I did not try," added he, assuming an air of modest vanity which well became his green old age. "I had a mistress of tolerably high birth, Mademoiselle d'Orléans, as indeed I had the honour of having the Princesses, her august sisters. However, the former, known under the name of Mademoiselle de Charollais, was dying to do some act of kindness that should be agreeable to me. Well, I requested she would obtain from the Regent, her father, the solution of the secret relative to the 'Iron Mask.' She used every possible device, but nothing could she obtain from her father, who protested that the mystery should never escape his lips; and he kept his word—he never did divulge it. I even imagine that the King himself is ignorant of it; unless, indeed, Cardinal de Fleury informed him of it.

The Marshal told me afterwards that he thought the opinion adopted by Voltaire the most probable—viz., that this

unknown person was the son of Queen Anne of Austria, mother of Louis XIV. These last words helped in a measure to solve the enigma which Comte de la Marche had left me to unravel; and, with a view to satisfy myself more positively upon the subject, I availed myself of the first opportunity when alone with the King to lead the conversation to this story.

At the mention of the "Iron Mask" Louis XV. started. "And do you really credit such a fable?" asked he.

"Is it, then, entirely untrue?" enquired I.

"Certainly not," he replied; "but all that has been said on the matter is destitute of even common sense."

"Well," cried I, "what Your Majesty says only confirms what I heard from the Maréchal de Richelieu."

"And what has he been telling you?"

"Very little, Sire; he only told me that the secret of who the 'Iron Mask' really was had not been communicated to you."

"The Marshal is a simpleton if he tells you so. I know the whole affair, and was well acquainted with the unhappy business."

"Ah!" exclaimed I, clapping my hands in triumph, "just now you affected perfect ignorance; you knew nothing at all about it, and now——"

"You are a very dangerous woman," cried the King, interrupting me by loud fits of laughter, "and you are cunning enough even to surprise the secrets of the State."

"'Tis you, rather, who could not resist the inclination to let me see that you knew that which the Marshal had declared you ignorant of. Which of us two is the more to blame, I wonder?"

"Myself, I think," answered the King; "for, after all, you did but act with the candour and curiosity of your sex. It was for me to have employed more of the prudence of a King in my replies to your interrogatories."

"Well, but," said I, "since you really do know all about this man with the iron mask, you will tell it to me, will you not?"

"I should have been very careful how I gratified your curiosity," said he. "This is a point in history which must never be cleared up. State reasons require that it should for ever remain a matter of doubt."

"And *I* must have you tell me," returned I. "Do pray tell, and I will love you with all my heart."

"It cannot be."

"And why not? This unfortunate person has been long dead without leaving any posterity."

"Are you quite sure of that?" enquired the King, in a serious tone.

"But what signifies," said I, "whether he be dead or alive? I entreat of you to bestow upon me this proof of your confidence. Who of all those who have spoken of him have told the truth?"

"Nobody; but Voltaire has approached it more nearly than anyone else."

After this partial confession the King implored of me to change the conversation which, I could easily perceive, was extremely disagreeable to him. Nevertheless, it seemed to me quite clear that this celebrated person belonged to the Royal Family, but by what title I could not divine. It was in vain that I afterwards revived the subject; not during the moments of the most tender confidence could I obtain the information I desired. Possibly had I lived with him some years more I might have succeeded in drawing from him all he knew respecting the object of my curiosity. Old men, like children, can conceal nothing from those they love, and who have obtained over them an influence they willingly submit to.

Before I proceed to more important events, I would fain speak of persons with whom I lived before my elevation. My godfather, M. Billard du Monceau, was still living, as well as Madame de Lagarde, with whom I had resided as companion. My interview with the former is well known; and the authors of "Anecdotes of my Life," published thirteen years since, have strictly adhered to the truth, with the exception of some vulgarisms they have

put into the mouth of that excellent man which he never uttered.

As to Madame de Lagarde, she was strangely surprised to see me arrive at her house: and the evident embarrassment my presence occasioned her was a sufficient revenge on my part for the many unkind things she had said and done respecting me. I would not prolong her uncomfortable situation, but studied to conduct myself with the same unaffected simplicity of former days. I talked over the past, enquired after her family, and offered my best services and protection, without malice, for what was gone by, and with perfect sincerity for the future. But, in spite of all my endeavours to spare her feelings, it was evident that rage and humiliation at the advantage my altered fortunes gave me over her struggled within her, and the conflict in her mind was but too plainly depicted in her countenance. However, that was the least of my troubles; I soon restored her to comparative calmness; and before I quitted her made her promise she would come and see me.

She would gladly have evaded this request; but her son, the Master of Requests, who sufficiently misjudged me to fear my resentment, and who possessed great influence over her, induced her to present herself at my house. She accordingly came to call upon me with a mind bursting with spite and jealousy; yet she kept down her angry passions, and so far humbled herself as to entreat my pardon, for her own sake and that of her family, for all her unkindness towards me. I would not allow her to finish. "Madam," I said, "I allow only agreeable recollections to find a place in my memory. Had I entertained the slightest resentment against either you or yours, you may be quite certain I should not have again entered your dwelling; and I again repeat the offer I made the other day, of gladly seizing the first opportunity of being useful to you."

Each of these words, expressive of the kindest feelings towards her, was like the stab of a poniard. She, however, extolled them with the most exaggerated praise, implored of me to believe how deeply she regretted her past behaviour,

and talked so long and so much about it that, when she quitted me, it was with the most certain impression on my mind that in her I possessed a most violent and implacable enemy, and in this conclusion I was quite correct. M. Dudelay, her son, had the effrontery to request to be presented to me, and charged the excellent M. de Laborde to make known his wishes to me. I begged he would inform M. Dudelay that I admitted no person into the circle of my acquaintance but such as were known to the King; and that if he thought proper to apply to His Majesty, I should obey the Royal will on the subject, whatever it might be. He justly considered this repulse as a biting raillery, for which he never forgave me. I entertained no illwill against him for his past perfidy, but I considered it strange that he should presume to approach me with familiarity. I should not have adopted the same line of conduct towards the farmer-general, his brother, who, less assuming, contented himself with assuring me of his devotion, and the sincere regret with which he contemplated the past, without ever seeking to introduce himself into my presence.

CHAPTER XXIX

The Duc d'Aiguillon is nominated captain of the Light-horse—The Abbé Terray, Comptroller-General—His portrait—Affair of the Duc d'Aiguillon—The Bishop of Tarbes and La Gourdan—The King's remark—The Bishop of Orleans intrigues with a scullion—The shops of Nantes—Madame Louise takes the vows—Opinion of the King respecting devotees—The Duc de Richelieu's observations concerning the House of Austria—The Comtesse du Barri is apprehensive of the influence of the Dauphiness over the King's mind—The Maréchale de Mirepoix endeavours to reassure her.

WHATEVER his flatterers may have urged to the contrary, it is very certain that at one time (whether instigated by fear or any other motive) the Duc de Choiseul exhibited strong marks of a desire to conciliate my friendship. He had been present at several suppers to which I had invited him; he had even accompanied me to Triel, an estate belonging to M. de Roussel, the farmer-general, who wished to sell it. I had, therefore, good reasons for supposing that this minister, acting on the prudent advice of his wife or Madame de Brienne, was disposed to cease his former annoying conduct. But this gleam of good sense quickly disappeared, and the Duc de Choiseul resumed his usual dislike towards me directly he learned that M. de la Tour du Pin, colonel of the regiment in which my brother was captain, had caused military honours to be paid me.

The minister loudly complained of this excess of condescension; observing to the gallant officer who had rendered it that such distinctions should only be paid to the Princesses of the Blood Royal, or, at the utmost, to Duchesses, but never to mere ladies of title. This speech, which quickly found its way to me, was but little calculated to make me feel great regard for him who had uttered it. However, the only re-

venge I took was affecting great friendship for M. de la Tour du Pin, whom I recommended to the notice of the King. Nevertheless, an opportunity of humbling the pride of the minister soon presented itself, and I was not slow in taking advantage of it. By the death of the Duc de Chaulnes the post of captain of the Light-horse became vacant. M. d'Aiguillon, who was very desirous of obtaining it, came to solicit my patronage in order to obtain the King's grant without passing through the tedious routine of preferring his request through the ministers, and His Majesty pledged me his Royal word to dispose of it according to my desire.

I leave you to judge how completely the Duke was *mystified* when, upon laying before His Majesty the papers and documents relative to this post, he learned from the lips of the King himself that the appointment of captain of the Light-horse was bestowed upon one he so thoroughly hated and despised. The Duke easily guessed that I had been the instigator of this measure, which was not of a nature to soften the bitterness of his feelings towards me. His sister was well-nigh expiring with rage when she heard of it.

The Duc d'Aiguillon had long attached great value to that favour which drew him thus about the King's person and admitted him even a messmate of the Royal military establishment. By joining his power and influence to that of the Chancellor they could the more easily deal out dangerous blows to the Duc de Choiseul, as they had frequent opportunities of weakening the King's confidence in that minister.

The Comptroller-General of Finances, M. Mainon d'Invau, was a man possessed of little merit, very short-sighted, and wholly inadequate to the high office he filled. One glance was sufficient to convey an idea of the man. I could never endure him; his awkward mien, his flat, dull-looking countenance and ridiculously-cut clothes disgusted me. He had, besides, the unpleasant habit of taking snuff in such prodigious quantities that whenever he set foot in

a room he literally strewed the floor and furniture with it To sum up the whole, he was a creature of the Duc de Choiseul's, and that alone was sufficient to render him odious in my eyes.

He was succeeded in his post by the Abbé Terray, a member of the Parliament of Paris, who had secretly sold himself to the Court, and managed (without any scruple) to have two strings to his bow. You, no doubt, recollect him, with his tall, lank figure, his plain countenance and vulgar, commonplace air. But beneath this unprepossessing exterior he concealed an acute and penetrating mind, a vast and ever-ready conception, and a most extensive capacity. He was endowed with boldness, effrontery and much real courage, added to an unshrinking firmness which nothing could intimidate or move. Joined to all this, he possessed an almost incredible insensibility to the misfortunes and sufferings of others, with the keenest relish for every species of sensual enjoyment, in which he indulged to the greatest excess. Until his entry into the ministry his conduct had been uniformly regular; he was looked upon as an indefatigable and upright man of business. However, he was not long ere he lost his reputation for probity, and never did minister draw down upon his head such general odium. The detestation entertained for M. de Maupeou was a trifle compared to the universal execration which attended the Comptroller-General. I own myself that, having contributed largely to his elevation to the post he held, I was at one time seriously alarmed lest the public clamour so loudly raised against him should be extended to me.

His admission into the Council was regarded as my work, and it was with the view of punishing me for this that the Duc de Choiseul instigated the Parliaments of Bretagne and Paris to recommence their tactics against the Duc d'Aiguillon with fresh violence. This affair is well known to you, and I need not again retrace particulars too painful for my memory. I will, however, instruct you in all that passed behind the curtain during the continuance

of this great contest, which brought about the destruction of the French magistracy.

The Bretons abhorred the Duc d'Aiguillon, whom they accused of cowardice and extortion, and of being an informer; they even went so far as to accuse him of having attempted to poison M. de la Chalotais. He was as incapable of this crime as of the others of which he was accused; but enemies as bitter as his were could not be expected to have much regard for truth or justice. It was unfortunate for him that the public voice should thus declare itself against him. He felt how imprudently he had irritated a whole province, and his favour at Court but very imperfectly satisfied him as to the probable result. He became gloomy and thoughtful, so much so that the King himself observed it. "What can it be that is vexing the Duc d'Aiguillon?" enquired the King one day; "his character seems to me entirely changed."

"I know of no cause he can have for the change Your Majesty speaks of," said I, "unless it be his lawsuit and the fatal termination it seems likely to meet with."

"These gentlemen of the long robe," rejoined Louis, "are bitterly enraged against him, but that is the way they conduct themselves towards all who faithfully serve me. Tell the Duke that I wish for nothing more ardently than the opportunity of serving him, and I desire he will let me know his wishes in the present affair."

This expression of goodwill was very gratifying to me, and I lost no time in repeating to the Duke the question asked by the King.

"Ah," said he to me, "this unfortunate contest will cause my ruin. It exposes me to a thousand annoyances on the part of the people, and God only knows how it will terminate."

I availed myself of this opening to acquaint him with the kind disposition of the King towards him.

"I am but too happy," said he. "Since His Majesty deigns to espouse my cause, I will consult my lawyers, and then hasten to lay every particular of the affair before you."

I shall now take leave of this affair for the present; it will come again before you in the proper course of events, but recitals of a less mournful character first claim your attention. It was now the beginning of winter (1770). M. de la Romagnère de Roussey, Bishop of Tarbes, was on his way to Versailles. This prelate, whose virtue and general conduct far excelled that of the greater portion of his brethren (who, instead of confining themselves to their diocese, consumed in Paris the revenues of their bishoprics), perceived before him a carriage, the wheels of which had just been broken by a cart, and a lady, still charming, although rather past the meridian of beauty, most splendidly attired, stepping through the mud in evident uneasiness and fears for her gay dress. The Bishop of Tarbes did what every man of quality, passing for a gallant and polished gentleman, would have done. He stopped his carriage, and hastily alighting, went himself to proffer the use of his equipage and escort as far as Versailles. The lady overpowered him with thanks, played with her fan, ogled and declared she could not do such a thing as disturb the comfort of a prince of the Church. After reiterated entreaties on the part of the prelate, no way discouraged by these first compliments and ceremonies, she allowed herself to be over-persuaded and to be led to the carriage. Once established as travelling companions, the conversation soon grew interesting, and the stranger bore her part in it so much to the charmed Bishop's satisfaction that, understanding from her that her business was at the Castle, he caused his carriage to set her down at the gate, and, giving her his hand, led her through the courtyards, corridors and staircases till he reached the apartments of the Maréchal de Richelieu, where he bade her adieu, without perceiving the smile of derision which had marked every countenance as he and his fair companion walked on arm-in-arm. This mirth will not surprise you when I tell you that the lady in question, so fascinating in her appearance, and so respectfully attended by M. de Roussey, was no other than La Gourdan, a celebrated procuress of the time, well known by the appellation of "the Little Countess." She had

come upon some affairs connected with her line of business in which the first gentleman of the bedchamber was concerned, and felt highly pleased at having made the poor Bishop the innocent instrument of her revenge upon the whole body of the clergy by the species of dishonour thrown upon the sacred cloth. Her first care was to have a hearty laugh with the Marshal upon her adventure. He was too charitable to conceal a fact already known throughout the Castle, and hastened to my house to relate it to the King. I leave you to imagine how much it amused Louis XV. "Well," said he, after he had fully enjoyed the laugh it gave rise to, "such an action proves incontestably the baptismal innocence of M. de Roussey. I will take upon myself to affirm that he is the only prelate in France who is not well acquainted with La Gourdan both by *word* and *deed*."

This witty remark, so full of meaning, amused us greatly. It was strictly just, for the bishops were then, with very few exceptions, the most unprincipled men in the kingdom. Not a day passed at Versailles without my hearing a number of anecdotes of their gallantry; but of all I heard, nothing equalled those relating to M. de Jarente. If all may be credited that was reported of him, I can only say, had I been a young and innocent girl, I would rather have passed a whole night beside any officer of the army than trust myself in open daylight for half an hour with my lord of Orleans.

The passion which this worthy Bishop entertained for women in general partook more largely of the gross desires of a satyr than the feelings of a man. He required at least a dozen ere his amorous flames could be extinguished or satisfied. Tall, short, fat, thin, and titled ladies, simple country girls, opera dancers, sisters of charity, boarding-school misses, common girls, all shared his homage, and were at different times sought for to gratify his loose and sensual propensities. I had a serious quarrel with him on account of a scandalous adventure which occurred in consequence of his intriguing with one of my scullions. The Duc de Villeroi showed better taste, and confined his favours

to my waiting-maids. Upon the occasion to which I allude Monseigneur de Jarente had to enter the lists as the rival of a groom. Like Joconde's "Maid of the Inn," my scullion had bestowed her heart upon a stable-boy, but dazzled by the shining louis of the Bishop, she strove to satisfy both suitors. Unfortunately the rival candidates met, and thereupon ensued a scene so disgusting and disgraceful that it not a little contributed to the disgrace of this ecclesiastic; and although I knew him to be entirely devoted to me, I could not bring myself to take much trouble in his defence.

But my pen is weary of detailing the affairs of others, I will change my subject for one far more gratifying to myself —the uniform affection and kindness which Louis XV. continued to show me. It was now the eve of the New Year. The King had in his gift the shops of Nantes; this was the monopoly of the buildings of a certain part of the city frequented by merchants, the revenue arising from which amounted to about 30,000 livres. Madame de Mirepoix greatly coveted this superb appointment, and entreated of me to request it of the King for her. My fondness for the Maréchale made me readily enter into her wishes, and I lost no time in mentioning the affair to the King. "I am sorry to be obliged to refuse your petition," said Louis, with a cold and constrained air; and, after a moment's silence, he continued, "I regret it, but I cannot now retract; my word is pledged, and I yesterday bestowed the 'shops of Nantes' on a lady of my Court."

"And to whom," asked I, eagerly, "have you given them? I trust not to that odious Duchesse de Grammont."

"No," replied the King, with a smile of pleasure, "not to any duchess in my kingdom, but to the all-lovely and enchanting Comtesse du Barri."

"Me, Sire?"

"Yes, my sweet friend, they are yours; and I am so much the more pleased with my selection, as you have, by your warm endeavours to serve your friend the Maréchale, evinced the disinterestedness of your own heart."

"Truly, Sire, your kindness demands my warmest

thanks; but I cannot deny that I should have preferred your offering them to the acceptance of Madame de Mirepoix rather than to myself."

"Oh," said Louis, "if that be all, I will endeavour to do something for her. We really owe her some recompense for the continual quarrels in which she is involved with her family, opposed as they all are to her intimacy with you, whose friend they are not disposed to be upon any terms."

A few days afterwards the King gave me for her a bank bill of 100,000 francs, which I hastened to convey to her. She took it, kept it, and never afterwards mentioned it. I have since learned, through the Duc d'Aiguillon, who heard it from his mother, that Madame de Mirepoix had related every circumstance of the affair (with the exception of the King's munificent gift) at the house of the Marquise du Deffant, her friend, or, at least, her old acquaintance. The thing soon spread, and my enemies having remodelled it after their own fashion, the scandalmongers of the day hastened to circulate it with additional commentaries.

This year was fertile in great events. On the 11th of April, 1770, Madame Louise, the youngest daughter of Louis XV., retired to the convent of the Carmelites at St. Denis. This virtuous Princess had conceived the project of taking the veil more than eighteen years previously. Disgusted with the grandeur of the world, and preferring a retired and contemplative life, she had found the means of practising the austerities of a cloister in the midst of the sensual life of Versailles. Her sublime virtues, her gentleness, her unalterable sweetness, made her almost adored by all the persons in her service, as well as by all those persons admitted to her acquaintance. She had never mixed or meddled with any Court intrigue; and, by a singularity of destiny, she never entered into the cabals of either party till after she had uttered those vows which severed her from the world. Then it was that the clergy availed themselves of her influence to gain any ascendency over the

heart of Louis XV., and to lead it to whatever purposes suited them.

Louis, who had long been aware of the design entertained by his daughter to retire from the world, had vainly striven to combat it; and it was not till after a resistance of several years that he was induced to consent to her retreat. Yet this Prince has been reproached for his apathy and insensibility. I can take upon myself to affirm that the circumstance of which I am now speaking cost him a most violent struggle. He had kept the secret up to the last minute, and he owned to me, the day following the departure of his daughter, that he had often been upon the point of admitting me to a participation of his distress, in order that he might have someone to whom he could speak of it, with a view to accustom himself to it; and that he still felt himself withheld by a feeling which was natural to his temper, and which he could not get the better of.

It was on Ash Wednesday, at seven o'clock in the morning, that the Princess, with Madame de Ghistel, entered one of the King's carriages, which had been placed by His Majesty at the disposal of his daughter from the preceding night. The Princess departed from Versailles without apprising her sisters, and without taking leave of anyone. She proceeded immediately to the convent of Carmelites at St. Denis, from whence she at once despatched Madame Ghistel with letters for her Royal father and sisters. The news thus communicated to the inhabitants of the Castle caused a surprise so much the greater as it was wholly unexpected. The Princesses Adelaide, Victoire and Sophie were much distressed; yet the feeling of anger at the mystery so long observed by their sister was mingled with the grief they all felt at thus losing her; besides, this determination on the part of Madame Louise appeared to convey both a censure upon their present mode of life and a hint to them to follow the example of their younger sister.

Visitors came in haste to talk over this event with me, and to enquire whether I had known anything of it previously. I

had sufficient prudence to conceal all previous knowledge of the matter; for had I yielded to a movement of vanity the Princesses would have been highly incensed against me for having been treated with greater confidence than themselves. I therefore replied to my numerous and indiscreet interrogators that I was equally surprised with the Court in general, and that I had heard nothing of this extraordinary resolution until after it was carried into effect. When next I saw the King I loudly expressed my concern as well as astonishment at his having been able thus to separate himself from his daughter. "How could I oppose it?" said he; "her vocation was from above. I did all that lay in my power to dissuade her from taking such a step."

"But, Sire," added I, "I greatly fear the poor Princess will be very unhappy."

"Fear it not," said Louis, "she will be the happiest of her family; the concerns of another world will alone occupy her, and she will escape the thousand annoyances which distract and vex those who set their affections upon sublunary things. Those devoted to a religious life are the only happy beings upon earth; they throw down at the foot of the Cross the heavy burdens with which human affections cumber them, and have no care for any of those conflicting passions which agitate their fellow-creatures. Their interest is bounded by the narrow circle to which they have limited their duties."

I could scarcely repress a smile at this picture of the life of a devotee, despite the air of sadness I, as well as the Court in general, was expected to assume in the present much-regretted circumstance, and I quickly turned the conversation upon other matters.

The next day I received a visit from the Maréchale de Mirepoix. "Well, what think you of Madame Louise?" was her first enquiry.

"That she is a saint."

"A fool, you mean," replied Madame de Mirepoix. "This is not the age for monastic seclusion and vows of celibacy. What will she do in a convent? torment the Court in the name of Heaven, and serve as a two-edged sword in the

hands of the priests. What do you suppose the Duc d'Ayen said to me yesterday of Madame Louise? 'The Princess wishes to go to paradise for no other purpose than to avoid meeting any of her family in the next world.'"

And this was the manner in which the Court of Louis regarded the noble and exalted act by which a Princess renounced the pomps and vanities of the world. As for myself, I can with truth affirm that, as I further reflected upon the choice of Madame Louise, it appeared to me an almost sublime action, entitled to universal admiration; and I felt disgusted with the insensibility of the courtiers who, as devoid of religion as of feeling, considered rank, power and money as the only precious things in life, and looked upon all who differed from their way of thinking as ridiculous or mad.

However, the wonder excited by the retirement of Madame Louise from Court, like other wonders, ceased after a time to engross general attention. It was the universal theme of conversation for the first day, declined in interest on the second, and was nearly forgotten on the third—the attention of the courtiers being attracted by other events, the most conspicuous of which was the marriage of the Dauphin with the Archduchess Marie Antoinette. This alliance, effected by the influence of the Duc de Choiseul, was a real triumph for this minister. The Empress Marie Thérèse, a woman of great virtue and exalted character, had long desired to place one of her daughters upon the throne of France. To accomplish this end she had to struggle against prejudices founded upon the rivalry of rank and family, and to surmount the general opinion of the fatality of the House of Austria towards the House of France. The Maréchal de Richelieu, whom no one will suspect of being too partial to the cause, was of opinion that this cause of dislike existed without any good grounds. He said to me: "It is insisted that any alliance with the Austrians has always been fatal to us. As far as regards the nation itself it may have been so, but with respect to the members of the Royal Family, which of them have ever failed to attract general admiration and esteem? Queen Elizabeth, wife of

Charles IX., was a most worthy and virtuous Princess, who well deserved every Frenchman's best regard; she retired pure and spotless from the horrors which sullied the reign of her husband and her abominable mother-in-law. Anne of Austria, married to Louis XIII., was the mother of one of our greatest Kings; and it is by her means the Bourbons reign in Parma, Naples, Spain, America and the Indies. Her niece, Marie Thérèse, was the best of wives. Louis XIV. obtained a rich and extensive country as her dowry. You see that Austria might with greater reason complain of France, which, since the reign of Louis XIV., has been continually stripping her of part of her possessions. These facts are stubborn things, which might strike the eyes of all men, who, nevertheless, go about repeating the contrary."

Thus the Empress had to struggle on against long-established prejudice. She had been greatly seconded in her endeavours by Madame de Pompadour, whom she cajoled with infinite grace. This lady, full of gratified vanity at seeing her aid thus sought by so august a Princess, lent her whole credit and endeavours to the Duc de Choiseul to bring about this marriage. Every obstacle was overcome, the betrothal took place, and the whole affair remained a profound secret till the hour for the celebration of the marriage.

I will not conceal from you that, feeling myself but newly established in the King's affections, the idea of the arrival of the young Dauphiness filled me with anxiety and alarm. I pictured her to myself as she really was—young, beautiful and fascinating. Once at Versailles, how could she fail to support the Choiseuls, to be guided by them, and to seek the destruction of my favour? I dreaded her rank, her wit, her many accomplishments, and the influence she might probably obtain over the mind of her grandfather. All these anticipations filled me with dread; and my friends, who, like myself, feared her arrival, sought by every possible means to irritate me against her and induce me to become her enemy before she had displayed the

nature of her sentiments towards me. Not that I have much cause of complaint: from the period of her becoming Queen she exhibited so much generosity towards me that I, above all others, should proclaim her incontestable superiority; and the respect with which she inspired me forbids me to repeat the slanderous reports which were even then circulated respecting her.

However, as she drew near the French Empire I could perceive an ill-disguised agitation diffused amongst the ladies who honoured me with their friendship; and I could readily see they were each deciding which would be the best moment for forsaking me. The Maréchale de Mirepoix alone seemed disposed to remain faithful to me. "Fear nothing," said she to me; "the King does not like new faces, and the Dauphiness will not please him, for the very reason that hers will be of a form he has not been accustomed to look upon."

"May Heaven grant it!" I cried; "it would be a death-blow for me to see my enemies triumph after all."

"The poor Marquise de Pompadour's fears were very different to yours. It was not a young and beautiful girl who tormented her, but the constant dread lest some rival should seduce from her the King's heart. I sought to console her by proving that, in the common order of things, the place she held was impregnable; and really to have superseded her in it, it would have been requisite to have offered the King what it was next to an impossibility to find, namely, a female, beloved by His Majesty, established in an apartment closely adjoining his own, and surrounded by a society equally pleasing and agreeable to him: it being difficult to unite so many desirable points, she remained certain of her post. You are far better off; the King has no eyes, no admiration, but for you. So be satisfied, and rest assured the Dauphiness will have no power to harm you in the affections of her grandfather."

CHAPTER XXX

The King assures Madame du Barri that she has nothing to fear from the influence of the Dauphiness, and promises that she shall be the first lady presented to that Princess—The Dauphin—The Comte de Provence—Louis' opinion of these Princes—The Comte d'Artois—Agitation of the Court at the approach of the Dauphiness—Quarrel between the King and the nobility on account of a minuet—Further particulars—The King's remarks upon it.

"WELL, my lovely friend," said the King to me, "we shall soon have a new Princess among us. She has no doubt matured her plans, and the Court of Vienna would not allow her to be at a loss for instructions. I will engage that she expects to carry all before her at Versailles. I doubt not she will do as she pleases with her husband, but with me it will be a very different affair."

"And can you really believe she will attempt to govern you?" replied I, with a secret joy.

"I know what I say," cried Louis. "Her mother is too anxious to place France amongst the satellites of the Imperial Crown to have neglected tutoring the Archduchess to obtain over us all the ascendency possible."

"May my lucky planet defeat any schemes she may form for supplanting me in Your Majesty's favour."

"Oh! be under no fears on that head," replied the King. "She would only have her trouble for her pains were she to attempt such a thing; for, believe me, you are as necessary to my happiness as the minister Kaunitz can be to Marie Thérèse."

"Sire," cried I, "you bring back joy and consolation to my heart, for I feared that this new Princess might appear worthy to engross all your affection."

"I shall love her as a father; that I am bound to do;

and I feel perfectly well disposed to perform the duty of one; but if she intrigue, or mix in the cabals of Court, if she seek to bring any innovations along with her, and aim at playing the Queen—in one word, I shall not be long in sending her back to the passive condition of a Dauphiness. Your Duchesses of Burgundy would not succeed with me."

This conversation restored to me fresh life; but I nevertheless determined to keep on my guard, and carefully watch the least diminution of my influence; and it was with a species of foresight that I replied to the King, "Whatever you may think, I am persuaded that your First Minister, in concert with the new Princess, will direct every measure at the will and pleasure of the Austrian Cabinet."

"You are mistaken, my dear Countess. The Duc de Choiseul may probably endeavour to ingratiate himself with the Dauphiness, but he loves France too well to sacrifice her interests to those of a stranger. You do him an injustice if you entertain a contrary opinion of him."

This expression plainly showed me how much influence the Duc de Choiseul still retained with his master, and how firmly rooted was the King's opinion of his integrity. I saw all the difficulty there would be in effecting his disgrace; and the first time I found myself alone with the Chancellor and the Duc d'Aiguillon I repeated to them what I had heard from the monarch. M. de Maupeou hastened to reply. "The only man we have to dread," he said, "is the Duc de Choiseul; if he preserve his credit with the King we must get rid of him. Louis, despite his indifference towards the Dauphiness, will not long be able to resist the double ascendency of his minister and this Princess. It only requires a fit of illness, or a sermon opportunely preached, to bring about a change that would be fatal to you. Let us, without delay, prevent such a step; let us overthrow an adversary far more dangerous than he appears to be." The Duc d'Aiguillon and myself concurred in this opinion, and you shall hereafter learn the manner in which we laid the snare into which this favourite minister completely fell about the end of the year. My present purpose is to relate to you

some of the particulars which attended the marriage of the Dauphiness. My enemies spread the report that the Empress had exacted from the King as a positive condition, or rather as a wedding favour, that I should not be presented to her daughter; or that if I were, it should be promiscuously with the other ladies of the Court, so that the Dauphiness might affect not to see me, and consequently dispense with bestowing upon me any marked notice. This absurd allegation, however, assumed at first something like the semblance of truth.

It became a fresh source of uneasiness to me; for although I well remembered all the King had said, he had forgotten to speak to me of what line of conduct I should pursue upon the precise moment of the arrival of the Archduchess. I wished many times to mention it to Louis XV., but a false shame constantly tied my tongue. During these difficulties my brother-in-law happened to call upon me whilst the King was present. His Majesty enquired what was said in Paris concerning the marriage which was about to take place. "A very singular report, Sire," returned he, "is in circulation. It is asserted that the Comtesse du Barri will not be presented to the Dauphiness."

"Will not be presented!" repeated the King; "and why not?"

"Because Her Imperial Majesty has exacted it as one of the marriage articles that my sister-in-law shall not appear before her daughter."

"This is a very impertinent assertion," replied Louis XV. "Can it be for a moment supposed that I should permit conditions to be imposed on me which would be positive dishonour. I will engage that this piece of foolery was concocted at Versailles, and from thence it has cleared the space which separates us from ancient Lutetia. These Parisians are such simpletons that they will swallow any sort of extravagance. But they shall not long have the gratification of saying I allow myself to be dictated to by a stranger; and I vow that the Comtesse du Barri shall be the first lady presented to the Dauphiness."

In my joy I could have hugged Comte Jean for his well-timed speech, but I contented myself with expressing to the King the extreme delight it would afford me to be admitted as early as possible into the presence of the Princess. "You shall certainly pay your court to her before every other lady in the kingdom," replied the King. "She shall learn my way of thinking before she is much older. I do not understand any attempts to direct my actions. Those who are looking forward to the arrival of the Dauphiness to concert fresh cabals will lean upon a broken staff if they depend upon her influence with me."

The fact was, Louis XV. had never fully approved of this marriage. He was not an Austrian, although there flowed in his veins some mixture of the blood of that nation; and the Princess inspired him with so much distrust that he brought himself at last to regard her coming merely as an attempt to seize his sovereign power. He saw with regret that the feeble passiveness of the Dauphin would not be a sufficient guarantee for the national interests, and that when he should ascend the throne the Cabinet of Austria would triumph over that of France.

The Duc de Berry, who had become Dauphin by the death of his father, had not from his infancy exhibited any of that superiority of character which constitutes a good King. Simple, modest and timid, he joined to these qualities —which, carried to excess, become defects—a sort of rusticity, which contrasted singularly enough with the polished urbanity of the courtiers. Nothing like an agreeable or gratifying expression has ever been recorded of him. Abrupt and impetuous, he was withheld by no consideration from giving utterance to his feelings, nor did he trouble himself in the least to wrap his plain truths in the words of polished language. His voice growled like thunder, whilst his fine open countenance inspired only esteem. However neglected might have been his education, he had some claims to the character of a philosopher. He had a particular taste for geography and nautical science; but his contempt for literature, properly so called, exceeded even that of Louis XV.

He does not seem more partial to it now than he then was. Cold, silent or absent, he was always wrapped in himself; nor did he ever display for our sex that passion which was the marked attribute of the greater part of the Princes of his house. He could not endure deeds of gallantry, and consequently he honoured me with his contempt. Contempt will not do, either; for every time that he spoke of me he accompanied my name with some rude epithet, and loaded me with appellations which have not yet been admitted into the vocabulary of well-bred persons.

In a word, he was a young Cato, wholly out of his element in a Court, whose words and actions had given no intimation of his being what he is this day. Certainly no person expected to have seen developed in him those vast plans, those profound combinations, which have enabled him to support the independence of America, and which now lead him to seek, in the nation, a support he can never find in the unskilfulness of ministers. In fact, in the Dauphin of past events, no one could have pictured the monarch of the present period, and all were strangely mistaken respecting him. It was imagined that because he was abrupt he would necessarily be cruel, and that his timidity would degenerate into an absolute nonentity.

Louis XV. spoke amongst his intimate friends in the same manner in which I have just expressed myself. "The people do not love me," he frequently said to me. "Well, let my grandson only be King for two years and they will bitterly regret my reign having passed away. The poor fellow will be guilty of so many silly things that he will bequeath the throne to his successors in a pitiable state. Austria will dictate all he shall say or do." On my side, I trembled for what would be my fate when he should be master; and yet you know, my friend, how entirely this excellent Prince undeceived me. You know the generosity and grandeur of soul both he and his august spouse exhibited towards me; and well have they acquired thereby claims to my eternal gratitude.

The next brother of the Dauphin, Comte de Provence,

was really as beautiful as an angel, with the wit of a fiend. He was well-informed, graceful and perfectly well-bred. I verily believe that he never suffered a word to escape him till he had considered, reconsidered and weighed it in its every sense. This young man has experienced no change with ripening manhood. The excessive care he bestowed in finding appropriate words to express his meaning gave it the appearance of hypocrisy, and he was even then accused of concealing, beneath measured terms and studied forms, a most overweening ambition. It is very certain that he sought less to obtain friends than partisans; he was neat, orderly, economical, not to say parsimonious; he laughed at the public, derided the Court, and was already looked upon by many as a person called to fulfil a high destiny. He courted only the virtuous females of the Court, in order that it might be supposed he held those of light character in detestation. His gallantry was very limited, and he began to play in the only case where he might have been pardoned for evincing his youthful passions and ardent temperament. Louis XV. frequently contemplated him with uneasiness. "If," he would say, "the Comte de Provence had been Duke of Orleans at the time of the Fronde, the crown would not have continued on the brow of my great-grandfather Louis XIV."

It even appears as though the Comte de Provence (now Monsieur) acquires each day greater credit. His conduct at the birth of Madame Royale was singular enough. Notwithstanding the talent, wit and polished manners of this Prince, he is not so much liked as feared. For my own part, I have yet to learn why *I* never had any reason to complain of his conduct. He never met me without saluting me with the greatest respect and addressing me in the most gracious language. Nay, I have been told that, after the death of his grandfather, whilst my enemies were surrounding the august young couple with every incitement to annoy and distress me, he openly declared in my favour, asserting that I was entitled to respect and kindness, if not on my own account, yet from regard to the memory of the deceased King. I felt the full force of his generous defence.

The second of the Dauphin's brothers, the Comte d'Artois, was a man of the most symmetrically formed figure, in which a particularly well-shaped leg shone conspicuously. A countenance agreeable without being handsome, accompanied with so much grace, vivacity, and powers of pleasing, that he was sure to charm at first sight. He was the gayest, most extravagant, affectionate and amiable of all the Princes. So fascinating was his manner that people never thought of searching into the depths of his lively sallies. The ladies idolised him; he was on good terms with everyone; nor, indeed, could the anger of any person withstand his frank, ingenuous character; and his occasional lapses were passed by, not as the wilful attempts of an ill-disposed Prince, but as the natural impetuosity of a young man whose numerous flatterers sought to lead him astray. The worthy descendant of Henry IV., he resembled him in loving the pleasures of the table, hunting and cards. Nor did he fall short of his illustrious ancestor in his admiration of the fair part of the creation; and in his homage to the ladies of the Court he still kept up the generosity and magnificence of a French Prince; differing in this last point widely from his two brothers, who each loved money and took pleasure in the management of it, the Comte d'Artois regarded it only as a means of enriching his friends, his mistresses and his dependents.

At first many persons sought to excite his dislike towards me. What do you suppose was his answer, after having seen me for the first time? "She is too pretty for me to hate her, even if I wished to do so; and if I were grandpapa, I would not leave so fascinating a woman for others." He often smiled at me without regarding how far he displeased other members of the family, and he has invariably shown himself the same kind creature to me.

Shall I now tell you something of the sisters, Madame Elizabeth and Madame Clotilde of France? When I was at Court they were so young that it was nearly impossible to form a just idea of their future character; nor did they at that tender age attract much notice from anyone. You will observe, too, that in endeavouring to describe the

Princes to you I can only speak of them as they were up to the time of the death of Louis XV., for having since that period only had indirect communication with the Court, I can merely speak from hearsay.

The approaching arrival of the Dauphiness at Versailles absorbed universal attention, and the courtiers eagerly awaited their first view of her, in order to decide upon the degree of influence she would exercise over the mind of the King, that they might accordingly regulate their own measures for ingratiating themselves into her favour. It was perfectly well known that she had been well tutored by her mother as to which persons or families she ought to be upon good terms with, and which to treat with coolness; and great was the anxiety that existed to have a glance at the notes relative to them, with which her secret tablets were filled. You can scarcely conceive the agitation which pervaded the courtiers, both male and female, during this uncertain state of things—some flattering themselves with the hopes of making a favourable impression upon the young Princess and others dreading the effect of impressions already received by her fatal to their wishes. I heard through a hundred different channels that the Dauphiness would be solely directed by the Choiseuls, and that was of itself sufficient to make me anticipate no share of her favour. This idea, which incessantly pursued me, became my greatest care.

I attached much more importance to all these hopes and fears than I afterwards did to a quarrel which arose at Versailles respecting the right to dance a minuet there. Never did so trifling a matter involve so many complaints, negotiations and conferences. One might have been tèmpted to believe the monarchy was in danger. Yet the whole affair consisted in an attempt to prevent Mademoiselle de Lorraine, as a foreign Princess, from dancing at the first ball which should be given by the Dauphiness. Heaven defend us! how insignificant can great lords sometimes make themselves appear; how absurd and immoderate is their pride! The Prince de Soubise was the

first who came to mention the affair to me. "Well," said he, with every indication of the most violent rage, "I suppose you know what has happened? You have heard of the extravagant pretensions of Messieurs de Lorraine? They would fain make themselves Princes 'by the grace of God,' whilst we must sink into modest insignificancy as very modest, humble gentlemen." And thereupon he commenced a long account of how the family of Lorraine—which had sprung from the same common stock as the Emperor Francis, married to the Empress Marie Thérèse, and father to the Dauphiness—had asked, on account of a union which seated their young relative on the throne of France, to receive some mark of distinction which might serve as their title among foreign Princes, and distinguish them likewise from the native subjects of the Crown; how Marie Thérèse had written concerning their request to Louis XV., who, thinking their wish both reasonable and just, and who, on the other hand, felt reluctant to displease the nobility of his kingdom by any great favours bestowed upon strangers, had sought to satisfy them by declaring that Mademoiselle de Lorraine should be the only lady who did not rank as a Princess who should dance in the first quadrille at the Royal ball held at Versailles in honour of the nuptials. The Prince de Soubise was indignant at this preference.

"But," said I to him, "such a mark of favour does not in any way interfere with your claims to Court distinction; you remain precisely the same as before. The only difference will be that Messieurs de Lorraine will take precedence of you, and you will take the place of Messieurs de Bouillon. It appears to me that it is only the rest of the nobility who can hold themselves aggrieved, and that our dukes and peers have more to complain of in the affair than you have."

M. de Soubise very well saw that, his family having the same pretensions as that of Guise, it ill became him to make difficulties; and, whatever vexation it might have cost him to take a second rank in precedency, he remained perfectly quiet until the moment when the dukes and peers, con-

founding in their rage the Rohans with the Lorraines, he found himself involved in a quarrel with those by whose side he had at the commencement of the dispute first ranged himself. The dukes and peers, whose pretensions were equally extravagant, presented a petition to the King, beseeching him not to bestow any extraordinary mark of favour on the family of the Guises. The gentry joined with them, and a terrible commotion was raised. As I have previously stated, Louis XV. dreaded every species of resistance; it cost him, therefore, a violent effort to perform the part of an angry master, and it was necessary to drive him to great extremities ere he could be sufficiently roused to enact it. The first show of his displeasure was exhibited in my presence. "Comte du Barri," said he to my brother-in-law, "are you on the adverse side of the question? Do you fancy that you would suffer any degradation either in name or profession because a young and pretty girl should have taken precedence of you at a ball?"

"Sire," replied Comte Jean, "you should not feel offended with your nobility for seeking to maintain their privileges; it arises only from a desire to support and set off the splendour of the throne."

"I know of nothing more disagreeable than these punctilious nobles," cried Louis. "They vex me beyond measure. I cannot possibly refuse the Empress a favour she asks for so near a relation; and, besides, I will grant it because it seems fair and just; and further, because it cannot do the least injury to any person. It is therefore my desire that it should be generally known and understood that any opposition to my will in the present matter will be highly displeasing to me."

The King repeated the same thing, but without success, to several other courtiers. The general intention of thwarting the House of Lorraine was not in the least abated till Louis XV., driven to the last extremity, published a declaration, which M. de Saint-Florentin signed for him, setting forth "that he could by no means refuse the Empress the species of favour she had requested for her kinswoman

through the agency of her ambassador; that the dance at the ball being a thing which could have no ill consequences (the choice of the dancers depending upon his Royal will alone), he trusted that the nobility of his kingdom would carefully abstain from opposing his wishes in a transaction by which he sought to testify his gratitude to the Empress for the gratifying present she had just made to himself and the nation."

Even this production, so singularly diplomatical, was insufficient to subdue the general spirit of resistance. Then began the first symptoms of what was styled "independence"; and the obstinacy with which the Court continued to strive against the King's purpose with regard to the ball was the prelude to the contempt they expressed for his anger when, after the disgrace of the Duc de Choiseul, they hastened to join him in crowds on the road to Chanteloup as though to set his Royal authority at defiance.

It was at the house of the Bishop of Noyon, the most ancient peer of France, that the nobility assembled to decide upon the best measures to oppose the threatened condescension at the ball. Thus the Church was brought in to take a part in these disputes, and the Bishop presented a memorial concerning them. The King took it with a shrug, and brought it to me. "What do you think," said he, "I should do if my good-nature did not amount to silliness? Why, send to the Bastille every person who has affixed his signature to this absurd paper."

"Ah! Sire," I replied, "say rather to the hospital for lunatics. But it would be more worthy of yourself to pardon them."

"Yes," said the King, "I will treat them like spoiled children; but they must not annoy me beyond endurance. If these gentleman of the clergy and the gentry both unite against me, we shall have the days of the Fronde back again."

CHAPTER XXXI

The King makes curious enquiries concerning the person of the Dauphiness—The unsealed letters—Petticoat No. 1, Petticoat No. 2, Petticoat No. 3—Arrival of the Dauphiness—The King presents Madame du Barri to the Dauphiness—The Archduchess Marie Antoinette—Innocence of the Dauphin—Accusation against the Duc de Choiseul—End of the opposition of the nobility to the minuet—The ball—The Maréchale de Mirepoix—Some portraits of great ladies—The Abbé de Vermont.

When the King's mind was undisturbed by family turmoils his disposition led him to enquire into the most trifling affairs. He gave me a proof of it on the day when M. Bouret, the private secretary, came to show him the Act by which the Austrian commissioners had given the person of the Dauphiness up to the French commissioners. Louis XV. was very partial to Bouret, and always spoke to him with much complaisance. He asked him at once, without ceremony, what he thought of the Archduchess.

"Exceedingly beautiful, Sire," was the reply.

"Yes, I understand you—a face of a Queen that is to be; it should be so with one destined for a throne. But has she a handsome bust?"

Bouret, confounded by such a question, replied that the Archduchess had sparkling eyes, a skin as fine as satin, and a mouth small and beautifully formed.

"Ah! my friend," replied the monarch, "that is not what I asked you. I ask you if my grand-daughter has a bust. Yes or no—answer me."

"Sire," said Bouret, blushing up to his eyes, "I had not the boldness to scrutinise what you ask me."

"Then, my dear, you are either a simpleton or a hypocrite; for when a man sees a young woman that is the

first thing he looks at — at least, all those who have a grain of common sense."

After Bouret had retired, as well as the rest of the company, consisting of the Duc d'Aiguillon, the Prince de Soubise, the Prince de Poix, the Marquis de Chauvelin and MM. de Villeroi and de Tresores, the King said to me:

"The Duc de Choiseul has asked my permission to go and meet the Dauphiness at Compiègne, and I have accorded it."

"Then you have done," said I, "just what my most cruel enemy would have done. You have given the Duke an opportunity of prejudicing the Princess against me."

"I do not think so, my dear; he will have too many things to think of to speak of you. Besides, what consequence can it be to you if he goes to meet her? Could he not see her at Versailles as often as he likes? Come, do not disturb yourself about it."

The King at this moment, attempting to take my hand and kiss it, let fall his handkerchief. I stooped and, kneeling down, picked it up. "You at my feet, madam!" cried the King. "It is I who ought to be at yours"; and so saying, Louis XV. knelt down before me. I confess that at this proof of love my emotion was very great. I raised the King and embraced him tenderly. He was most agreeable all the rest of the evening. We amused ourselves by reading the account sent to us by M. Rigoley, Baron d'Orgny, the Inspector-General of the Post-Office, of the unsealed letters of the week. They were filled with various reports, true or false, as to the state of the Court on the approach of the Dauphiness.

Since I am in the humour to talk about this scandalous curiosity which mingles itself with the closest relations of life, I must tell you what the King met with one day in a letter written from Berlin, and which did not please him very much, as you may easily believe when you read what follows. It was not in 1770, but in 1774. In this letter, written by a refugee Frenchman to a relation, it was stated that His Majesty of Prussia, discoursing with one of his

ministers of a negotiation set on foot with France, and believing that the minister placed the date of the event at an epoch too remote, said to him, "You are wrong, my dear sir; the thing was not done under the reign of Petticoat No. 1 (*Cotillon* 1), but at the beginning of that of Petticoat No. 2 (*Cotillon* 2)."

You must know that the King of Prussia divided the reign of the King of France into three parts. The first was that of Madame de Châteauroux; the second, that of Madame de Pompadour; and the third, that of mine. Thus we were *Cotillon* 1, *Cotillon* 2, *Cotillon* 3. Louis XV. on hearing this jest was much irritated at it, and it tended materially to increase the hatred he felt towards Frederick II. I assure you that if the late King had lived longer he would have had a splendid satisfaction for this insolence. The letter in question was burnt, and M. de la Vrillière desired him who had written the letter to terminate all correspondence with his relative in Prussia if he would keep his liberty.

At length the Dauphiness arrived. She had made the first experiment of her power by receiving M. de Choiseul very coolly. The Duke endeavoured in vain to injure me in the estimation of the Princess. Marie Thérèse had given her daughter the most sage advice, and had recommended her to act with the utmost prudence towards me. The Dauphiness's line of conduct was not to seek, but not to avoid me. I will say, in commendation of her, that she behaved towards me with the greatest propriety, and that if I lost her goodwill it was my own fault, when from sheer folly I opposed her. I must still wonder how it was that she did not punish me when she had the power.

The same evening that the Dauphiness arrived the King said to me, "Look as handsome as you can to-morrow. I wish to prove to my grand-daughter that I am a man of taste. You shall sup with us at Maette." The next day, after having made myself as handsome as possible, I went to the Château. My unexpected arrival, the affability with which the King, taking me by the hand, presented me to his grand-daughter, the extreme grace with which she received me, the favour-

able words which she addressed to me, and which neither her smile nor her looks belied—in a word, my triumph drove my enemies to despair. The King, who watched me with the greatest anxiety, could not forbear asking the Dauphiness what she thought of me. "Madam," replied the Princess, "seems to me a very seducing lady, and I cannot be astonished at any attachment she may inspire." This flattering remark was told me instantly, and greatly delighted me. As for me, I examined the Dauphiness as if to thank her for her eulogy, and to return her a portion of the approbation which she had bestowed on my beauty. This Princess was between fifteen and sixteen years of age. She appeared to me less beautiful and fair than pleasant and lady-like. Her hair was of a reddish auburn, but her skin was of a dazzling whiteness. She had a beautiful forehead, a delicious set of teeth, a well-formed nose, eyes full of vivacity and expression. Her air was majestic and dignified. She walked well; her figure was well shaped, and her gestures were more free and unstudied than those of any of the Princesses of the Blood Royal of France. As to the qualities and defects of the Dauphiness, I shall not allow myself to dwell upon them: respect interdicts all eulogy, and more especially all criticism. The Queen has evinced so much kindness towards me that it would be the height of ingratitude for me to say a word disrespectfully of her. Be sure that she has not at the present day a subject more devoted to her, and who would be less desirous of displeasing her. I content myself with assuring you that instantly on her arrival she conquered all hearts. If she afterwards lost them it was not her fault, but that of four or five privileged families who could never pardon her for not having chosen her favourite and friend out of their circle. To return.

The same evening, after having well scrutinised the Dauphiness, and thinking the Dauphin very fortunate in possessing so *lovable* a lady, I began to examine him also. I was struck with his frigid manners. He scarcely looked at his radiant bride, whilst his grandfather gazed upon her with eyes which were unfaithful to me. The King saw,

as did everyone else, the calmness, or rather the sadness, of the Dauphin. His Majesty came to my side and said, "I will lay a wager that the poor boy is very much embarrassed as to what remains for him to do. The Duke de Vauguyon ought to have instructed him. It is a thing which the Governor of the children of France ought to teach them at the end of their education."

After this remark he called the Governor, and, drawing him aside, said to him:

"Duke, do you know if the Dauphin knows how to behave?"

"Yes, Sire. He has not been left in ignorance."

"And was he inclined for a repetition of the lesson to play his new character with propriety?"

"No, Sire."

"Was it proposed to him?"

"Yes, Sire."

"And did he refuse it?"

"Yes, Sire."

"Ah! the simpleton."

And the King rubbed his hands and shrugged his shoulders.

During this amusing conversation of the King I saw the Duc de Choiseul approach the Dauphin and accost him. I was surprised at the increasing coolness which gathered on the face of the Prince. There was even a sort of severity visible, which greatly surprised me. Some days afterwards I profited by a moment when I was alone with the Duc de Richelieu to ask him why the minister was not in the good graces of the Dauphin.

"What!" replied the Duke, "do you not know?"

"No; but I should like to learn very much."

"It is because the Duc de Choiseul is accused of having poisoned his father."

"What! the Duke's father?"

"No, madam, the father of the Dauphin."

"Ah!" cried I, "you are telling me some shameful calumny."

"I assure you that I, at least, have not invented any of it, and that the source is a very pious one."

"Explain yourself."

"The reverend fathers, the Jesuits, in the lively hatred they bear the Duke as their most cruel enemy, could find no better means of revenge than by charging him with the death of the Dauphin. Their spies, who environ the living Dauphin, have contrived to convince him of the Duke's guilt, and I assure you that if he or his brothers should be called to the throne the Duc de Choiseul will not remain in the Ministry."

So said the Marshal. I confess to you that, for my part, I give no credit to any such horror. It appeared to me too far from the character of M. de Choiseul, and if I had had as much wit I would have answered as did M. de Voltaire to someone who was telling him some infamies of M. de Beaumarchais: "It is impossible; he is too much of a wag for that."

After having told you a tale of poison I must now tell you of a certain ball. The transition is somewhat abrupt, but what can I do? I do not know how to write methodically. Besides, I have no occasion for formality in writing to you, and have no ambition to pass with you as a second Madame de Graffigny. Listen now, with all your ears, to the history of the ball, and the grand revolt of the lady dancers.

The reply of the King had not tranquillised the nobility. They assembled at the house of the Duc de Duras, and there agreed that, to protest against the innovation, neither men nor women should appear at the ball. As soon as this decree had been made, the report of it spread all over the Château. The malcontents sought nothing better, in the hopes that the King, to avoid such a desertion, would countermand the ball announced. But Louis XV. was piqued, declared that things should be as he pleased, and that those ladies who did not appear at the ball would incur disgrace. This he took care to repeat several times at my house and elsewhere.

The Minuet

From Picture by C. De Lort



"You will punish me then, Sire," I said, "for certainly I will conduct myself as they do, and I shall not go to the ball—at least, the first."

"Your situation," he said to me, "ranges you in a class apart. If I am to find myself alone at the ball with my family, I should be sorry that you should come. But if there be some ladies who obey me, hold yourself in readiness to go at the head of them."

I promised that I would do so.

The moment of the ball arrived, and three ladies alone presented themselves—Mademoiselle de Lorraine, who was thus the heroine of the evening, even more than the Dauphiness herself, Madame de Bouillon and Mademoiselle Rohan. Five o'clock—six—and no one came. The King grew angry, and sent word to the ladies resident at the Château to present themselves under pain of incurring his displeasure. The majority refused, with the Duchesse de Grammont at their head. Some arrived at last. They were Mesdames de Maillé, de Duras, de Douissan, de Polignac, du Pajet, de Traus, de Dillon, de Ségur, and one or two others whose names I have forgotten. I arrived last at the ball, which had already begun. I did not assist at the famous *contre-danse*, in which the performers were the Dauphin, the Dauphiness, the Comte de Provence, Madame the Comte d'Artois, the Duchesse de Chartres, the Duc de Chartres, the Duchesse de Bourbon, the Prince de Condé, the Princesse de Lamballe and family, the Duc de Bourbon, and the fortunate Mademoiselle de Lorraine, whose triumph was thus complete. Finding his vengeance satisfied, the King called the Comte d'Artois, gave him his commands, and the young Prince led out the Maréchale de Duras for the seventh minuet, which made all the ladies who had come perfectly contented.

The next day there was, in the Château, chattering without end. Those who had held out against the Royal will looked with contempt on those who had submitted, and there was much trouble in bringing the revolters back to good order. Madame de Mirepoix called it "the great feudal battle."

"Alas!" said she, "we have attained such a point that our husbands can only show themselves rebels in a ballroom. In former times this dispute would have terminated sword in hand. There is no longer a nobility in France. We are but the titled dependents of Royalty." The good Maréchale heartily deplored the feudal times, which, however, by all that I ever heard, were not the most happy.

I imagine, my friend, that you will not object to my giving you a list of the household of Madame la Dauphine. The establishment was composed of M. de Fleury, Bishop of Chartres, almoner; the Comtesse de Noailles, a lady of honour; and the Duchesse de Cossé, lady in waiting. The first lady was very virtuous and, at the same time, the most tiresome animal in existence. She was born for the boredom of ceremony, and was only happy in the midst of the puerilities of etiquette. She ate and drank conformably. Her mien was staid and chilling, and her perpetual remonstrances soon rendered her a nuisance to the Dauphiness, who, at last, made a jest of her maid of honour and called her *Madame l'Etiquette*.

The ladies in attendance on the Dauphiness were the Comtesse de Grammont, she who, with the Duchess of this name, pursued me with so much bitterness. This lady was not at Court at the time of the marriage. Her conduct towards me had compelled Louis XV. to exile her, and she chewed the cud of sweet and bitter fancy at a distance from the Château. She did not return hither until after the King's death. It is true that at this epoch I was much vexed at their recalling her by a charming letter, which amply repaid her for what she had suffered. Besides the Countess, the ladies in attendance were, the Comtesse de Tavannes, the Princesse de Chimay, the Marquise de Valbelle, the Duchesse de Beauvilliers and the Duchesse de Chaulnes. The latter pleased the Dauphiness at first sight; but her strange manners, her lack of intelligence, her shallow understanding, soon destroyed the feelings of attachment with which she had originally inspired the Princess. She was in great favour at first. The King, wishing to give a supper to his grand-daughter at Trianon, the Dauphiness asked

him to allow her to bring the Duchesse de Chaulnes with her. The King consented to it, but, on his side, took me with him. As soon as the Dauphiness saw me, she went to the King and said to him, "Ah! Sire, I only asked one favour, and you have granted me two." This touched me even to tears.

The other ladies were the Duchesse de Durfort, the Marquise de Maillé, the Comtesse Talleyrand, the Marquise de Tonnerre, the Duchesse de Luxembourg, and the Vicomtesse de Choiseul. In spite of her name this latter was not my enemy. She and her husband hated the Choiseuls cordially, and they attached themselves to me with all the hatred which they bore to their own family.

The men were the Comte de Saulx; Tavannes, *chevalier d'honneur;* the Comte de Tessi, groom of the chamber; the Vicomte de Talaru, *maître d'hôtel*, &c. But all these gentlemen would freely have exchanged their condition with that of simple reader to the Dauphiness, the Abbé de Vermont. He was a philosophising priest—not a man of family, and short-sighted in his policy. You know the vast credit which he had with the Queen. He had only to ask and have a bishop's mitre or a cardinal's cap. Well! he always disdained such honours. His pleasure, or rather his ambition, was to make cardinals and bishops; like some great man, in days of yore, whom I have heard of as a maker of kings, but who would not be one himself. Sent to Vienna to assist in the education of the Archduchess as soon as it was decided that she would be the Dauphiness of France, the Abbé de Vermont received such a reception from the Empress that thenceforward he belonged body and soul to the House of Austria. He only saw, he only acted for this House, and, whether under the preceding reign or this, he has always worked for the interests of a rival power. I much fear that his fatal counsels, by misleading the Queen, will finally destroy the love of her subjects. Louis XV. never guessed that the Abbé de Vermont would do such mischief to the monarchy. He saw him, on the contrary, with pleasure. "See," said he to me, "a rational priest. He will not fill the

head of the Dauphiness with fanaticism. If we did not see his robe we might take him for a captain of cavalry. What is to be praised in the Abbé is that he has no pride of rank; he is a plebeian, and glories in it. It is the most splendid modesty of the times." There is in his fortunes a singular peculiarity. The reigning King never liked him, and, perhaps, has not spoken to him half-a-dozen times since 1770. Well! this estrangement of Louis XVI. did not diminish the credit of the Abbé, so much consideration has the King for the inclinations of the Queen.

CHAPTER XXXII

Wedding night—Consultation of the doctors on the Dauphin's health—The modern peerage—The Duc d'Aiguillon and the Parliament—Sessions of Parliament—Conversation—The Chancelier de Maupeou—The Bed of Justice—Disquietude of the Duc d'Aiguillon—Decree against him—Anger of the King—The King and the Comtesse du Barri—The King and Mademoiselle du Barri.

THE day after the marriage there were many strange reports concerning the bridegroom. The King joked with the Duc de la Vauguyon about it, who replied, "Sire, this is not part of a Governor's duty—his authority, counsel and example are useless when Nature is mute. Attribute it to nature if the Prince has not done his duty."

The King began to laugh. Then, resuming a serious air, he said, "How is it that I am so badly represented by my direct descendant? If he prove no more skilful in the science of government when he comes to the throne I think the nation will regret me."

It may be supposed that Louis XV. said this jestingly. Such was not the case. I knew him well enough to detect the secret joy which the misfortune of his grandson inspired him with. He thought himself gifted with all the powers of which his grandson had betrayed an inefficiency, and his vanity was flattered. However, the malady of the Prince continuing, a consultation of the faculty was held. Doctor Quesnay, who was the chief medical man to the King, shrugged his shoulders. "Let him alone," he said; "we have nothing to do. Time will arrange all, and when it comes the Prince will know how to profit by it." They would not listen to Quesnay, and wished to consult others of the fraternity, who proposed performing an operation, to which

the Dauphin would not submit. Reference was made to the King, who, after a few moments' reflection, said, "Since it displeases my grandson, let us hear no more of it. Leave him in peace. We shall see by-and-by what will be best."

After this reply, or one something like it, which I cannot put to paper, the matter was allowed to rest. Profound silence was kept concerning the consultation; Quesnay, who had opposed it, was the only one to whom a present was made. The King complained of it altogether, but I thought it all for the best, and there the matter rested.

Allow me here, my friend, to leave the march of events and return to my history. I shall pass silently over the fêtes that accompanied the marriage, the termination of which was so unfortunate. You know as well as I do the details of the sad catastrophe which followed the fireworks let off in the Place Louis XV.; you know, as does all France, what was the grief of the King and Royal Family; you know the precautions which were taken to deceive the monarch as to the real cause of this great misfortune, and how he was prevented from punishing the three culprits—the lieutenant of police, the *prévôt des marchands* and the *architecte de la ville*. This event announced the marriage of Louis XVI. under very unfavourable auspices. Thanks to God! these sinister presages are not accomplished, and the new reign progresses with a tranquillity which a little reassures the disquiet of my mind. I leave these afflicting topics to talk to you of the sad affair of the Duc d'Aiguillon.

From the commencement of the preceding year this nobleman, by the advice of his advocates, had made up his mind to profit by the goodwill of the King. In consequence he asked, in a petition presented to the Privy Council, that his suit with the Parliament of Bretagne should be transferred, to be decided by the peers assembled in Parliament. It was thought that he had committed a fault by acting thus; but the result proved the contrary, and testified that, had he referred to any other arbitration, he would have been ruined.

But the Parliament being called upon to pronounce in

this matter, it was feared that, in the interest of another Parliament, judgment would be given against the party assailed. The Duc d'Aiguillon had many conferences with the Chancellor. He could only think of one way of accommodating the affair and to make an equalisation of interests: it was to get the King to preside in person. Thus he was flattered as being master of his own deliberations, and of leading them to his will. There was, moreover, another idea in M. de Maupeou's mind, which he afterwards told me. It was that of placing the magistracy in contact with the King; and he hoped that they, by their demeanour and inflexibility, would soon displease Louis XV., who would thus think himself personally offended, and, out of revenge, destroy the magistracy.

It was the merest chance that precisely the contrary did not happen, and that the Parliament were not reconciled with the King. You will perceive presently how they prevented the adjustment. Be this as it may, the high magistracy appeared at first charmed at the honour of the King presiding. As to the suit itself, they declared that there was no need to judge a peer in his own cause, that it should be sent to them by a superior order, being empowered by their own essential powers to decide on all that concerned one of their own members.

This point, which the Parliamentarians decided to their own advantage, was contested with them by certain dukes and peers, who pretended that they alone were the born judges of their equals. But the Princes of the Blood combated the first of the pretensions of these noblemen. The Royal Family could not understand that dukes and peers should consider themselves the representatives of the great feudality; they only looked on them as members of Parliament enjoying certain prerogatives and honours accorded to the presidents of certain tribunals. It was edifying to hear the conversation thereon between the Princes de Rohan and de Bouillon, and the Ducs de Duras, de Crussol and de Richelieu. I shall not weary you by repeating all they said. I shall come at once to facts.

On the 3rd of April, 1770, the evening before the Parlia-

ment was to assemble at Versailles, the King appeared to me much occupied with the part he was about to play.

"Well," he said to me, "I am going to meet these black gowns face to face. I do not know what we shall say to each other, but be tranquil; if there be any one of these gentlemen who is anxious to show his opposition, I will show him that my arm is long and my hand strong."

"Oh! I am convinced that these gentlemen will be full of obedience. They bark at a distance, but when close upon them it is quite another matter."

"I confess that if the dear Duke was not interested in this circumstance, I should be charmed at it. It is a fine thing to render justice, as did Saint-Louis at Vincennes."

"You may establish a tribunal in your garden."

"Oh, no; this is not the time. But I will establish it in the Château, and I will also render justice as well as did my sainted ancestor." This became, after a few days, the fixed idea of Louis XV. He figured to himself, and justly, that all France would have its eyes fixed on the solemn sittings at which the King in person should preside: he feared that they might not be content, or that they might hiss him. I gave him courage, although much agitated myself. I feared that the result of this great conference would be unpropitious either to the Duc d'Aiguillon, by condemning him, or to the King if he should act contrary to general opinion. The Chancellor was delighted at it; he hoped wonders from the conflict which he foresaw would rise between the Royal self-love and the Parliamentary vanity.

On the 4th of April the Parliament arrived in a body. The place of meeting was in the Queen's ante-chamber. There were benches covered with cloths worked with *fleur-de-lis*, a temporary flooring, and a throne. The Court being assembled, the King went, accompanied by the Princes of the Blood, but without any other suite or guards. The officers of the Parliament were stationed at the doors and did all the duties of the chamber. M. de Maupeou, having received the King's orders, announced to the assembly the motives of their convocation. He insisted principally on the express will of

the monarch, who had no intent to violate the liberty of opinions, and who declared that he did not intend to swerve from any received rule. When he had spoken, the First President made a harangue in his turn. The rest of the sitting was filled up by the reading of papers concerning the proceedings instituted against the Duc d'Aiguillon by the Parliament of Bretagne. It was ordered that they should be handed over to the clerk of the Parliament, and the Attorney-General was enjoined to take cognisance of them, and follow up all necessary proceedings.

The sitting was long, and all passed with an order and dignity which delighted the King. He was very fond of solemn and ceremonious forms, because they allowed of his remaining in the calm which was so delightful to him. When he came to see me his face was radiant with joy. "Well, my dear," he hastened to say, "all has passed off wonderfully well, as you said. These persons have been very rational. I wish they were always so."

Then turning to the Duc de Richelieu, who had accompanied him, he said:

"Do you know that such an assembly is very imposing, and that its usages are very respectable. It seems to me that a King figures better *there* than at a chase or a ball."

"As for me, Sire," replied the Marshal, "I prefer him at the head of his army. There he has no need to hold his 'beds of justice': all are on their knees."

"*Cedant arma togæ*," replied Louis XV., laughing.

"What is that Greek stuff?" I enquired. "Is there no mischief in it?"

"No, madam," said the King, "it is not Greek, and there is no malice in it. I said to the Duke in good Latin that the soldiers must yield to the magistracy. I assert, in opposition to him, that to render justice is the noblest occupation of a King. Besides, this morning there was no question of the compulsory regal sitting. I was then in the capacity of first judge of my own kingdom, the Court being adequately garnished with peers"; and at these last words, which Louis XV. amused himself by pronouncing in imitation of the

drawling and nasal sound of the First President, he began to laugh.

The Duc d'Aiguillon did not come to my house this evening. It was a severe trial to his generous heart that the King should have heard all the charges made against him, and he did not like to appear before His Majesty. Louis XV. remarked his absence, and said to the Duc de Richelieu, "Where is the Duc d'Aiguillon? Is he fearful of appearing before his judges? Such delicacy well becomes him, but I willingly dispense with it. If I were to see him, no one here will denounce me to these messieurs and tell them to deprive me of my right of voting."

The Marshal sent for his nephew, who came quickly on such a summons. As soon as he entered the King said to him, "Do not distress yourself, I know it is for me you are suffering, and I will not forget it. The Parliament only assail you because by so doing they think they can cast indignity on my crown. My faithful servants displease these gentlemen, and they did not treat Fitz-James any better at Toulouse than they used you at Rennes. Let them go on; I will let them amuse themselves for a time, and then I will finish all by an act of my freewill, if they have not sense enough to yield to my desires, which are clearly manifested to them."

This assurance transported the Duke; and if he had been somewhat uneasy on entering, he went away fully satisfied and rejoicing.

The second sitting took place on the 7th of April. This time the Attorney-General recapitulated the charges against the Duc d'Aiguillon, and at the same time asked that, as the Parliament of Bretagne was incompetent to give judgment on a peer, his proceeding should be quashed as illegal and a new one be instituted. His conclusions were adopted and a fresh suit was commenced. The King gave his opinion conformably to that of the counsellor Michaut de Monbleu, whose oratorical talent had captivated him. He only added that he thought it fitting not to use the monitions according to the usual form. The Parliament, with a desire

of making themselves agreeable to the King, agreed unanimously with his advice. This greatly flattered Louis XV., and he went away still more charmed with the second session than he had been with the first. He manifested a desire of frequently presiding at the Court of Peers, and gave orders for a suitable room to be prepared at Versailles.

Such thoughts pleased neither the Chancellor nor the lords. The latter feared that the King, inclining too much to judicial forms, would be environed by the principal magistrates, who would create fresh influence with the Sovereign. M. de Maupeou, particularly, who already knew himself to be odious to his old associates, trembled at the anticipation of such an intimacy, and accordingly prepared himself to divert the current of the King's ideas.

Louis XV., for his part, saw that he was strangely mistaken in thinking that he might rely on the complaisance of the Parliament. He had hoped that these gentlemen would gradually abandon the proceedings instituted against the Duc d'Aiguillon; but, on the contrary, the process was carried on with more rigour than ever. The King did not repress his feelings of anger. M. de Maupeou profited by this disposition to represent to His Majesty that some of the judges ventured to dispute his commands with respect to the Duc d'Aiguillon, the person invested with the confidence of his Sovereign, and that the Parliament only saw in this affair a felicitous occasion to diminish the Royal prerogative and to increase the power of their own body. When the Chancellor had spoken, Louis XV. said to him:

"Do you really believe, and will you swear by your honour, that this is the secret thought of the magistracy?"

"Yes, Sire, such is the evident aim of their ambition."

"Then, in that case, they must be punished before they can execute their purposes. But how do you know that such is their intention?"

"I have gone through every grade of the magistracy. I can easily divine all their thoughts, and have sought to crush this from the first moment I heard of it. Yes, Sire, they wish to form a Government which shall have as many

heads as there are Parliaments in France. They would dispose at their will of the military, as well as of the administrative and judicial powers, and they would only leave the monarch the mockery of outward splendour, destitute of authority, and totally powerless."

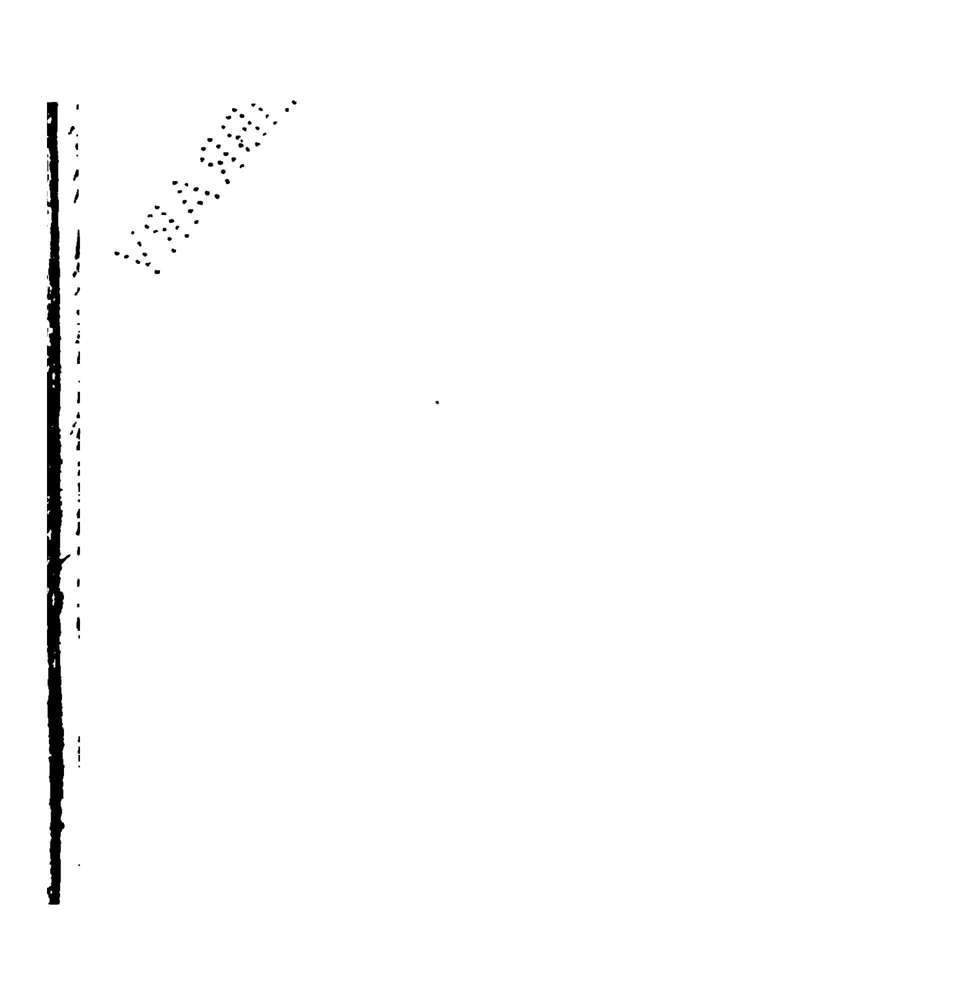
At these words of the Chancellor an expression of annoyance was visible on the countenance of the King. He sought to joke with the Chancellor, that he might not seem to let him have too great an advantage in the discussion; but as soon as M. de Maupeou had left us alone, the King gave free scope to his anger, and expressed to me his disquietude on the future destiny of the State. However, the fêtes given at the marriage tended to distract his attention, and he forgot both his love and fear of magistracy. He contented himself by stating to the persons who composed his Parliament that he understood they should terminate the proceedings so improperly and inopportunely instituted against the Duc d'Aiguillon.

This order having been considered as not imperative, on the 27th of June following the King reassembled the magistracy at Versailles. It was not now done with the intention of partaking of their labours, but to dictate to them laws with all the pomp and hauteur of a Bed of Justice. This menacing ceremony was performed with great splendour. The Dauphiness saw it from one private window, and I from another. I was only induced to be there to testify to the Duc d'Aiguillon the interest I took in his welfare.

The Parliament were not prepared for the humiliation that awaited them. The Chancellor, taking precedence by virtue of the charge entrusted to him, told the assembly how greatly the King was discontented with them, and with what indignation he had contemplated their attempts to control the Royal mandates. He added that the hatred they bore to the Duc d'Aiguillon had impelled them to testify a lack of respect towards their Sovereign, and that the King therefore of his own authority quashed the whole affair. The prescribed forms of the Beds of Justice

A Session of the "Bed of Justice" at Versailles

From an Etching by Girardet



interdicted all reply. The Parliamentarians therefore preserved silence, determining, in the depths of their hearts, not to obey.

We went on the same day to Marly. The Duc d'Aiguillon, whom the King had desired to follow us, supped with us that evening. I was delighted at the determined manner in which the master had supported the dear Duke, but he did not seem to share my joy. When we had a moment to speak alone I asked him if he were not content with the result of the day.

"No," replied he. "It certainly gives me the King's goodwill, but it will create for me so much hatred that I scarcely think I can venture to felicitate myself."

"Think you, then, that the Parliament will dare to disobey?"

"I am sure of it. They will oppose me with more venom than ever; and what particularly annoys me is that you will be compromised on my account."

I endeavoured to reassure the Duke; but all I could do and say to him could not eradicate the fear he had of the vengeance of the Parliament. He anticipated its fury, but not to half the extent with which it subsequently raged.

On the 2nd of July, whilst we were triumphing at Marly, the Parliamentarians made a decree by which the Duc d'Aiguillon was declared attainted. They suspended him from his privileges as a peer until he should submit to the judgment of the Court of Peers, which should enquire into the affair.

Never was a stroke of party policy better conducted. The decree, of which ten thousand copies were printed, and which was communicated to the Duke himself, appeared simultaneously in all parts of Paris. I was alone in my apartment, thinking of nothing, when Comte Jean came in bearing the terrible piece of information. I read it, re-read it. I was distressed beyond measure at the misfortune of the poor Duke. I must do Comte Jean justice, and say that he was displeased with his friends the Parliamentarians. He left me, and the King came in; he was pale, his lips quivered

his lofty mind could not brook the affront which the black gowns had cast upon him; he strove to speak, but could not at first, so greatly was he agitated. At length words poured from his lips in a torrent. I can assure you that had the Parliamentarians seen and heard him at this moment they would have repented of their boldness.

"I know not," he exclaimed, "what hinders me from despatching my musketeers with orders to go and flog these black gowns at the doors of their own houses. I am half inclined to make all these rebels sleep in the Bastille."

I was much moved at the emotion of the King; and, unable to control my feelings, I fainted. This event had a good effect. Louis XV. regretted the fright he had caused me, and busily engaged himself in reviving me. As soon as I had recovered the use of my senses I cast myself at his feet, and with tears besought him to be careful of enraging the populace. He returned me no answer, but addressed himself to my sister-in-law, who was with us.

"Chon," said he (for he always spoke very familiarly to her), "what would you do in my place if you were so grossly insulted?"

"Sire," she replied, with as much readiness as hardihood, "I should consider the guilty as my children, and pardon them. If I punished some it should be so as to cause them more fright than injury."

"Ah," said the King, "I forgot that you are a Toulousan, and consequently a Parliamentarian from top to toe."

"Sire, I am more attached to Your Majesty than to all the Parliaments in the world. Therefore I speak more for your interest than theirs."

The King's anger subsided gradually: he smiled; then, coming towards me with a look of gracious pity, he said:

"Poor Countess! I have given you a great deal of uneasiness."

"Yes, Sire, because I see that you yourself are similarly distressed."

"True, I appeared to you as a Jupiter Tonans."

"Certainly," replied my sister-in-law, "by the noble

majesty of your person you might be easily taken for the king of the gods."

This comparison, as you may believe, was not displeasing to the King. He took Mademoiselle du Barri by the hand, and, tapping her lightly with his fingers, said, "Flatterer, why make us vain when we are naturally but too much inclined to vanity?"

At this juncture MM. de Maupeou, de Saint-Florentin and de Bertin, the Bishop of Orleans, the Abbé Terray, the Duc de Richelieu and the Prince de Soubise entered. They held a privy council, and it was determined what the next day, and for form's sake only, was to be discussed in the Council, convoked in the most formal way. It was resolved that the decree of Parliament should be revoked, the Duc d'Aiguillon maintained in his rights as a peer, and the Parliament forbidden to advance further in the affair.

Such a decree should have pacified all; but no such thing. The utmost extremities were to be resorted to. I will tell you hereafter the result of these measures; my strength fails me now to continue this recital. I require repose after the sad remembrances which I have called up. To-morrow I will tell you of a quarrel between Madame de Grammont and myself. I hope this will amuse you, although it did not much amuse me at the time it occurred.

CHAPTER XXXIII

"Now Choiseul! Now Praslin!"—Insult of the Duchesse de Grammont to the Comtesse du Barri—The King determines on exiling the Duchess—The King and the Duchess—Banishment—The Duc de Choiseul and the King—The Duchess's letter—Madame de l'Hôpital and the Comtesse du Barri.

From the instant of the arrival of the Dauphiness the Duchesse de Grammont, most unwisely flattering herself that so mere a child would easily be led to support her in all her haughty measures, increased her impertinence towards me till I could no longer bear with it. I learned, from incontestable authority, that in a private audience she obtained from the young Princess she made use of it to calumniate me in the most shameful manner. She even had the folly to boast to others of what she had done, and they eagerly ran to bring me the news. I must confess that the intelligence wrought me up to the greatest rage against her. I complained to the King of her conduct, and besought of him to silence this insolent woman. Louis XV. had a personal dislike to the Duchess; but as the Dauphiness had exhibited some show of regard for this lady, he felt reluctant to annoy his grand-daughter by exiling a person for whom she entertained a partiality. I therefore resigned myself patiently to the endurance of these insults, contenting myself with throwing into the air two oranges, crying alternately, "Now Choiseul! Now Praslin!" This little ebullition of feminine rage was performed before His Majesty during a short visit he paid me, and amused him greatly. I would have rested satisfied with this childish vengeance had not the Duchess, urged on by her evil genius, played me a last trick, which ended in her total disgrace.

I was going to pay my court to the Dauphin, when Madame de Grammont, either by design or accident, managed to obstruct my way; and, rudely endeavouring to pass me, set her foot upon the train of my dress and tore it to shreds; after which she proceeded, laughing most immoderately. Unfortunately for her the King, who was just then following me, was witness of the outrage. He made me a sign to be silent; and I easily read in the angry frown which darkened his countenance that this insult would not long remain unpunished. I returned to my house agitated and weeping with rage. My sister-in-law, to whom I related what had just taken place, said to me, "If the King does not avenge you he will be undeserving the name of a man. The insult offered you, if allowed to remain unpunished, will of necessity reflect dishonour on him likewise."

However, as quickly as Louis XV. could take leave of his grand-daughter he hastened to rejoin me. Directly he saw me he exclaimed, "Ask me nothing, tell me nothing. I promise you that your cause is mine also, and in my own person I will avenge it. To-morrow the Duchesse de Grammont shall be publicly expelled the Court."

The sight of the King's rage had the immediate effect of calming my former anger, and, recovering my wonted good-nature, I began to intercede for my rival. "You are a fool," said the King; "you do not know for whom you are pleading. If the Duchess were ordered to put you to death by ten thousand pricks with a pin, she would not excuse you one of them. Nevertheless, since she inspires you with so much pity, I will spare her the disgrace of being publicly *chassée;* but go she must."

It was in vain I continued to supplicate in her favour: the King was inflexible. Then, returning to his palace, the King sent the Duc d'Ayen to the Duchesse de Grammont, with orders to acquaint her that the King granted the audience she requested, and begged she would not fail to keep the appointed time. Great was the surprise of the lady at receiving this message. It was evident even to M. d'Ayen, who, although, from motives of policy, polite and attentive

to her in public, was not particularly fond of her in his heart. She could not restrain herself from saying to him that she had requested no audience of the King; for, having the felicity of seeing him daily as much as she desired, she had no need to solicit a private interview. "Doubtless, madam," said the Duke, "the King's message has reference to some affair of gallantry. You know how deeply he venerates wit and beauty."

The Duchess was far from finding consolation in this compliment, but, wishing to quell any rising suspicion in the mind of the Duke, she exclaimed, "Ah, His Majesty has indeed a better memory than I have. I recollect now that several weeks since I begged he would grant me a quarter of an hour's audience. He promised to do so, and further engaged to let me know the first leisure he could command. Pray assure His Majesty of my gratitude and punctuality."

The Duc d'Ayen, upon his return to the King, when questioned as to the manner in which his message had been received, repeated, word for word, what I have written above. I have since learned, from one of the Duchess's waiting-women (for as the Choiseuls had their spies in my mansion I took the liberty of having some in theirs), that immediately after the visit of the Duc d'Ayen, the Duchesse de Grammont hurried to the house of her brother, where they were closeted together; that they passed more than an hour in warm discussion; that their voices could even be heard distinctly in an adjoining apartment; and that when the Duchess quitted the house it was with swollen eyes, flushed cheeks, and every indication of a mind ill at ease.

The following morning, before the audience took place, the Duc de Choiseul sent to enquire whether His Majesty would be pleased to see him immediately. The King returned for answer that he could receive no person just then, but that his minister might come to him after the visit of the Duchesse de Grammont. This answer was not calculated to allay the uneasiness of my enemies.

The Duchess, seeing no means of turning aside the

threatened blow, determined to meet it courageously. She was a woman of energetic mind, with a clear, clever head, and possibly had a heart disposed for friendship. Nevertheless, with all these qualities, she could never play more than a second part, from the want of that all-essential requisite for success, the art of self-government. She presented herself before the King with much embarrassment in her manner. Louis XV. received her with that severe glance which disconcerts and with that cold politeness which is more chilling than any words, and begged of her to be seated.

This was a favour which, in audiences given in his private apartments, he was accustomed to bestow on all women without distinction of rank; and the Duchess, whose conscience would not allow her to feel the ease and tranquillity she strove to assume, was much affected. Nevertheless, wishing to give to the conversation which was to follow a less solemn turn, she endeavoured to smile graciously, and said:

"Sire, Your Majesty, in addition to your many acts of favour to myself and family, has condescended to bestow upon me the honour of an interview I had not ventured so far as to solicit. I have hurried to receive Your Majesty's commands, the least of which will be held sacred by me."

"One thing is certain," replied the King; "and that is that your submission to my will is merely in appearance; and whatever may be the desires I may form, you trouble yourself very little to gratify them."

"Me, sire! Yet Your Majesty may recollect——"

"I have forgotten all that has ever passed between us, madam," replied Louis XV., with increased sternness of manner. "I see nothing but the present; and I am under the necessity of expressing my dissatisfaction at it."

"Dissatisfied with me, Sire?"

"Yes, with you, madam! And what is there in those words that can excite your surprise? It is now nearly two years since you have taken pleasure in rendering yourself disagreeable, and have eagerly sought every opportunity of annoying me. Your whims and caprices have at length

wearied me beyond endurance. Hitherto I have listened only to the feelings of esteem due to your brother; now I must hearken to what I owe to my own dignity, and I am, in defence of it, compelled to have recourse to a very painful measure."

"Ah, Sire," interrupted the Duchess, "my enemies have, then, succeeded in injuring me in your estimation."

"Your enemies, madam! You have none greater than yourself. To your own conduct alone must be attributed all the ill that may befall you. You have made yourself an object of dread; but you shall be so no longer. I have to charge you with a long tissue of unkind actions towards a person most dear to me. You may not love her—that I cannot insist upon; but you should respect her for the affection I bear her."

"Ah, Sire," cried the Duchess, with an air of sentiment which did not impose upon the King, "that would indeed be more than I could endure."

The King went on: "I choose to be master in my own house; and when those about me refuse to conform to my wishes they must quit it."

"Your Majesty dismisses me, then."

"Dismisses or exiles you, whichever you please. Your absurd behaviour drives me to extremities; and the last act of determined malice fills up the measure of your offences."

"The last?"

"That which I saw yesterday, madam, at the house of the Dauphiness. I trust you do not mean to add the vice of falsehood by denying the fact?"

"Ah, Sire, do not punish me for hating her who has so fatally succeeded in effecting my ruin."

"Pardon me; you are free to hate as you please, but your rude and gross insults I cannot allow. Thus I punish, not your hatred, but your unpolite and unworthy conduct. I therefore command your absence from Court, and recommend you to travel in any country but this until you receive fresh orders."

"What! Sire; do you persist in your resolve?"

"Yes, madam, as obstinately as you have done in your system of opposition. You have constantly insulted me for two years, and I therefore banish you from Court for a similar period. Wait until the *third* year of your exile ere you accuse me of severity." So saying, Louis XV. bestowed the usual salute which announced the termination of the conference. Madame de Grammont, quite overcome, was going to throw herself at the feet of the King, but he prevented her; and taking her by the hand conducted her to the door, where he honoured her by a profound inclination of the head.

The Duchess, filled with confusion, hastened back to her brother. She found him with her sister-in-law; and, no longer mistress of herself, threw herself in a paroxysm of rage upon the sofa, and amidst a torrent of sobs and tears, related all that had transpired. The husband and wife listened with deep concern; they clearly perceived how the disgrace of the Duchess involved their own likewise. The Duke, in particular, began to regret having allowed his sister to go so far, and not having at the outset separated his cause from hers. Much would he have given that things had taken a different turn; but through her fault he was placed in an equivocal position, from which he could scarcely escape with honour. The Duchesse de Grammont besought her brother to hasten to the King, since he had permission to do so, and supplicate him to modify the severity of her punishment. The Duke, unwilling to afflict his sister, obeyed her wishes, without having, however, the least hope of success.

Louis XV., like all weak men after any unusual effort of courage, had relapsed into his accustomed timidity. He therefore felt some little embarrassment at the sight of his minister, to whom he gave the kindest reception in the world. The Duke, emboldened by the King's manner, determined upon abruptly entering upon an explanation.

"Sire," said he, "my sister has experienced the weight of your anger. She has had the misfortune to draw down Your Majesty's displeasure."

"True, sir," replied the King, making a violent effort to recover his firmness.

This short and decisive reply rather disconcerted the Duke. Assuming, therefore, a supplicating tone, to which he was but little accustomed, he proceeded:

"My sister is in despair at having given cause for Your Majesty's severity. Let me beseech you, Sire, to soften the rigours of a punishment she has doubtless well merited."

"Duc de Choiseul," replied the King, "if a single one of the indignities which for the period of two years have been constantly heaped upon the Comtesse du Barri had been offered to the Duchesse de Grammont, Madame de Beauvau, or Madame de Brienne, you would have taken powerful and marked vengeance for the insult—you would not have endured it thus long. My patience has been great; but your sister has carried her overbearing conduct too far for the further exercise of it; I desire, therefore, that she shall quit the Court, and that, too, out of regard for yourself, without any exposure or *lettre de cachet*—in a word, without the existence of any written proof of my displeasure. This is all the leniency I can show. Do not look for more; rather thank me for restraining my so justly-kindled anger, when your sister never once permitted any motives to set bounds to her outrages."

The Duke saw that reply would be vain. He bowed and retired.

M. de Choiseul returned to his sister to relate the ill-success of his embassy. The Duchess, from the moment when all hopes of moving the King's clemency failed, seemed to recover all her former pride. She wrote the following letter to the King, which, as it was deposited by him in my hands, I transcribe for you:

"SIRE,—My brother has just announced to me that Your Majesty, persisting in your rigour, demands my immediate retirement from Court. I submit to your sacred will. May my obedience prove to you my respect and affection; that which afflicts me most in my misfortune is the consciousness of having displeased you. My only consolation is the knowledge that your dissatisfaction will not extend to the Duc de Choiseul. I should not now have incurred Your Majesty's anger had I but listened to the excellent advice of him whose leading passion is the desire to promote Your Majesty's glory.—I remain," &c.

When the King next visited me, and we were alone, he said to me, "Behold the proof that you are avenged! The Duchess quits Paris and only returns under every assurance of good behaviour. If you wish to judge of her epistolary style, read that letter." I did so, and was delighted with it; it seemed to me full of weight and dignity, and, besides, there was a tinge of heroism in it which charmed me. I did not disguise my opinion from the King.

"You are a real treasure," said he, "and those who wish you ill do not know you."

"That is exactly what they say, Sire, of the Duc de Choiseul. The other day I was talking of him with the Maréchale de Mirepoix, and, after having spoken disparagingly of him, I added, 'The reason I hate him so very much is because I do not know him.' 'I should be still more astonished,' replied the Maréchale, 'if you knew him and yet could hate him.'"

"That was prettily said," replied the King, "and the Maréchale is a woman of much good sense; but, as you possess an equal quantity, I have a favour to ask of you."

"And what can Your Majesty ask that I would refuse?"

"It is to bear your victory without a triumph, and not to overwhelm Madame de Grammont."

"I promise it, and if what has transpired becomes known it certainly will not be by my means." In effect, with the exception of the Duc d'Aiguillon and my sister-in-law, in whom I confided it, I preserved a most exemplary silence. Some slight murmurs were heard in the Castle at the absence of the Duchesse de Grammont, but they were caused by that lady herself, she having assigned as a reason for quitting the Court that she could not support my presence.

Some days after the departure of Madame de Grammont, the Duc de Choiseul, to whom this catastrophe had revealed the extent of my influence, formed the project of conciliating me. Certainly this was not a very feasible measure, or rather it was now too late to put it in practice; too many indirect attacks, too many sarcasms and mistrusts separated us. Nevertheless, trusting to the superiority of his own

mind, he flattered himself with changing my feelings with regard to him. But how was he to address me, how reach my ear, surrounded as I was by persons so entirely opposed to him?

In this difficulty he cast his eyes upon a lady whom I saw very frequently, and who, not being upon very intimate terms with his family, could not awaken the suspicions of those about me. He therefore selected Madame de l'Hôpital to become his ambassador. From what you have heard of this lady you will readily believe that she willingly undertook the office. Invested with her new honour, she came to me, saying, as she entered, "Receive me, I pray, with all possible consideration; in fact, you ought, in justice to the high powers with which I am vested, to receive me from your throne, for it is as an ambassador I present myself before you." She continued this sort of jest for some time, till after many entreaties on my part that she would explain herself, she said:

"First of all, you must promise me secrecy."

"Be satisfied," I returned; "since I have become an inhabitant of the Castle I have learned to dissimulate as well as others. But what is the matter?"

"I come to propose to you a treaty of peace, or an alliance, whichever you like to call it. I am charged to request you will grant an interview to a sort of half-potentate."

"Ah!" I cried, "you need not pronounce his name, I can guess it. Is it not the Duc de Choiseul?"

"You have said it," said Madame de l'Hôpital.

At this intelligence I remained speechless with amazement. A thousand sudden reflections assailed me. I asked myself whether it were possible the Duke could thus descend from his altitude, if such a return were sincere, and if it might not only be a fresh ruse of my enemies, who sought to gain time till the death of the King that they might afterwards sacrifice me at their pleasure. All these ideas revolved in my head in less time than it has taken me to write them. Madame de l'Hôpital perceived, by my silence

and agitation, that some extraordinary conflict was passing within me.

"You appear startled at my proposal," she said, "and think it strange the haughty Duke seeks to humble himself on his knees before you."

"Oh, no! nothing surprises me at Court," I answered. "We who live in it must be prepared for rapid changes. We must see our mortal enemies in one instant transformed into our most intimate friends without bearing one tittle more of love or affection towards us for the metamorphosis. Upon this principle it would excite within me no surprise if you brought me overtures of peace from the Duchesse de Grammont, the Princesse de Guémenée, or any other lady of the cabal. But I have reflected upon what you said concerning the Duc de Choiseul. What benefit can result from an alliance with him? I am well aware that his desire to be upon good terms with me does not arise out of disinterested friendship, and I will not be the dupe of shallow professions."

"Now, it is my opinion," cried Madame de l'Hôpital, "that M. de Choiseul is conscious of his injustice towards you, and wishes to atone for it. Besides, my mission is bounded to the request for an interview. Grant it; then both of you will be able to explain yourselves to your hearts' content."

"I cannot do so until I have consulted with others."

"It is very certain that if you consult the Chancellor he will dissuade you from seeing the Duc de Choiseul; it is to his interest to keep up your enmity with the minister. The same will be the case whether you ask the advice of the Duc de Richelieu, the Duc d'Aiguillon, or any of your other friends. If it be contrary to your own judgment and inclination to receive M. de Choiseul, I entreat you to say so, and in that case I must trust to your goodness to allow the whole affair to remain a profound secret, as well as the share I have had in it."

"Now, really," said I, with vexation, "you are a very unreasonable woman. Do you wish me to give myself

up bound hand and foot to my enemy? Is that just, pray?"

"But, my dear Countess, the Duke does not wish to murder you."

"Listen," I said; "there is in my house a lady (my sister-in-law) of whose opinion and good sense I think so highly that I am willing to abide by what she says. Will you consent?"

Madame de l'Hôpital yielded, and I summoned Mademoiselle du Barri, who, after hearing all our arguments, gave it as her opinion that I should receive the Duc de Choiseul. "You will thereby," she said, "escape the reproaches of your enemies, who will accuse you of refusing to listen to an offer of reconciliation."

I listened to my sister-in-law's advice with so much the more willingness as, woman-like, I was very curious to know what the Duke would say to me. After some difficulties with his lady ambassador, the interview was fixed for the following day. Till to-morrow, then, I will reserve the continuation of my recital.

END OF VOL. I


224070

